Economic Prospects for 1936 — By JOHN STRACHEY

JANUARY 21, 1936 15c

New Masses

Mussolini's Men Are Deserting — By JOHN L. SPIVAK

Morgan Loves His Country — By JOSEPH FREEMAN

By Romain Rolland
THE EUROPEAN SPIRIT

By Waldo Frank
LETTER TO ROMAIN ROLLAND

By Joshua Kunitz
THE NEW SOVIET VILLAGE

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new Masses

JANUARY 21, 1936

Torturing the Constitution

THE opinions of the judges of the Supreme Court in the A.A.A. case make very interesting and instructive reading. The lesson which these opinions teach is not exactly new—it is in fact the old one, familiar to all students of our so-called "constitutional system of government," namely that our actual government has absolutely nothing to do with the one provided by the Constitution. These opinions prove anew, if such proof were necessary, that "unconstitutionality" has nothing to do with the Constitution. And it is gratifying to have such three judges as Brandeis, Stone and Cardozo say it in as near ordinary English as the judicial robe will permit. It is not every day that three such eminent judges tell their brethren of the majority that their decision is based upon a "tortured construction of the Constitution," or that the opinion by which the decision is supported "hardly rises to the dignity of argument." Nor is it at all usual for judges of the Supreme Court to admit that — "While unconstitutional exercise of power by the executive and legislative branches of the government is subject to judicial restraint, the only check upon our own exercise of power is our own sense of self-restraint."

"H'YA TOOTS!" *Anthony Colin*

IT IS nothing new in the history of the Supreme Court that a law should be declared unconstitutional in utter disregard of the Constitution. Nor is it particularly new that in so doing the Court should have resorted to torturing the Constitution, logic and history. But it is rather new that it should be done in order to declare unconstitutional a piece of legislation such as the Agricultural Adjustment Act. For by no stretch of the imagination can this Act be called "radical." The "torturing" of the Constitution and the resort to "absurdities" and "contradictions in terms" indulged in by the majority of the Supreme Court, according to the minority, have, therefore, a significance beyond the business in hand. The significance is two-fold: (1) that we live in the midst of a rising tide of reaction; (2) that the A.A.A. was declared unconstitutional not for what it is but for what it portends. That the tide of reaction is running high was best demonstrated by the resolutions adopted at the recent Convention of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce. And the real animus behind the decision in the A.A.A. case is shown by the examples used by Mr. Justice Roberts, speaking for the majority, by way of illustrating the "subversive" character of the law. It is also shown in the following paragraph of the majority opinion:

> A possible result of sustaining the claimed Federal power would be that every business group which thought itself *under-privileged* might demand that a tax be laid on its vendors or vendees, the proceeds to be appropriated to the redress of its deficiency of income.

THE Constitution, we must understand, is not and never was meant to protect the *under-privileged*. On the contrary, it stands in the way of their protection—even if they happen to be small business groups. But what was uppermost in the Court's mind was *labor*. The decision in the A.A.A. case is clearly an arrow pointed at the heart of *security* and *labor* legislation. This was announced with commendable frankness by the "friends of the Court" in the chorus of approval with which they greeted the decision. To repeat the real significance of the A.A.A. decision lies not so much in what it actually accomplished as in what it *presages*. And the spirit of the Court is truly revealed in a sentence of the concluding paragraph of the majority opinion, in which the Court says that if Congress were permitted to have the power to enact such legislation as is symbolized by the A.A.A., Congress would "become a *parliament of the whole people*, subject to no restrictions save such as are self-imposed." Apparently, under the Constitution as "tor-

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out of recognition by the Supreme Court, the American people are not to be permitted to have "a parliament of the whole people," and the only unrestrained power in the land is to be that of the Judges, who are to remain the sole arbiters of the destinies of the American people.

West Coast Terrorists Prepare

WHEN Paul Scharrenberg asked the federal government to break up the International Seamen's Union on the Pacific Coast, he added his voice to the already familiar pleas of the shipowners. The reactionaries have long threatened to do the job themselves—through violence and vigilante terror—if the government did not act. And evidently the employers have decided not to postpone the offensive against militant unions any longer. THE NEW MASSES learns from authoritative sources that the open attack has been set for the end of this week. Unless a sudden shift occurs in the plans of the Industrial Association, the Waterfront Employers' Association and the Chambers of Commerce, there will be a definite attempt once more to raise the Red-scare, to mobilize public opinion against the maritime unions. Such an attack is not scheduled for this week without good reason: The International Seamens' Union is holding its convention in Washington, D. C., where the West Coast delegates will be under pressure from the government, the employers and the reactionaries such as Scharrenberg who was kicked out of the I.S.U. last summer by the rank and file.

THE excuse for demanding government interference in West Coast labor organizations is two-fold. The forming of the Maritime Federation on the Pacific Coast has given labor unity and coordination of action against wage-cuts, speed-up, arbitrary dismissals, all the abuses that unorganized workers must face. The example has spurred the formation of a similar Maritime Federation on the Gulf and cannot but effect the East Coast where wages and working conditions are unfavorable compared to the prevailing standard in the West. Secondly, the agreement between the seamen and the employers, in operation since the West Coast strike of 1934, has expired and must now be renewed. The seamen demand certain necessary modifications. The employers are anxious to seize this chance to smash the unions, restore conditions to the good old days before the strike when the workers were not in the position to effectively resist exploitation. To accomplish this, the employers have raised a campaign of slander against the maritime union, slander which the capitalist press eagerly prints, slander which pictures the rank and file as "irresponsible," "unprincipled," "Reds," "dangerous to the public welfare." To clean out these "abuses," the owners threaten a reign of terror that will make the vigilante raids and police brutality of the San Francisco General Strike look like a tea party. But the employers, despite the fact that they are backed by the state and federal governments, despite their money and their well-armed thugs, can no longer fool workers or their supporters with propaganda long since outworn. It is now common knowledge that when the West Coast owners begin to "defend" public interests, there is profit in it not for the public but for a small group of finance capitalists who do not hesitate to beat, burn, even murder to assure that the last cent of profit is squeezed out of the workers.

Louise Bryant Is Dead

WOMEN of our western capitalist world have always lived in a harem, as much as their sisters of the Orient. True, the bars have not been as obvious, but the results in character have been much the same. It has taken rebels and pioneers among the women to break through and that is why, despite a superficial timidity and conservatism, this enslaved half of the human race can ultimately be counted on the side of progress. To free herself, woman must help free all the oppressed of the world. Louise Bryant, wife of John Reed, who died in Paris on January 12, was such a rebel woman of great charm and courage. There was a strain of Irish revolutionary blood in her family, which made her a romantic rebel poet by heredity. But there was also a shrewd Yankee head perched above her attractive shoulders, and though such reputations are ephemeral, she was one of the first-class journalists of her time. Louise Bryant accompanied John Reed through all the stormy and dangerous scenes that marked the Bolshevik victory. Her book on the ten days that shook the world hadn't the genius of her immortal husband's, but what American reporter has yet attained the stature of John Reed?

ON HER return to America, Louise Bryant proved as valuable a friend in need of the beleaguered Soviet peoples as her great husband. She lectured and wrote extensively and was a star witness before a Red-baiting congressional committee that was "investigating." Her poise, clarity and wit under the fire of the pot-bellied congressmen gained many new friends for the slandered Soviets, and helped break the world blockade against them. Louise Bryant, like John Reed, had a great zest for life, for adventure in every form, for poetry. She was deeply loyal, like he, to the cause of the oppressed and was a revolutionist against capitalism. They were a glamorous couple. Although later she married William C. Bullitt, now Ambassador to the Soviet Union, to whom she bore a child, the best of her seemed to have gone into the grave by the Kremlin wall where John Reed lies dreaming. Declining health in latter years withdrew Louise Bryant from any active work in the movement and she spent her time gathering invaluable material about John Reed. Recently she turned these documents over to the Harvard Alumni John Reed Committee for use in Granville Hicks' study of Reed. An indomitable fighter for women's rights, Louise Bryant's death is a loss both to the women in this country and abroad.

Mother Bloor's 45th Year

AMERICA has produced some great women and Mother Ella Reeve Bloor's name will always shine among the leaders. She is seventy-four years old, this little woman with the radiant face and beautiful eyes; and now she is celebrating her forty-fifth year of activity in the labor movement. It has been a stormy life spent on picket lines, in jails, a life of agitation and organization of the workers in the teeth of the capitalist terror. She raised a large family of splendid boys and girls during this epic struggle, all of whom have attained distinction, in the labor movement and outside. Hundreds of thousands of miners, farmers, seamen and housewives are included in this family and call her "Mother." She has led a hard life, but she loves people and they love her. Like Eugene V. Debs, this valiant little grandmother has always been a spiritual force in the midst of events that turned other

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people into cynics and wolves. She is an unquenchable lover, optimist and organizer. Recently Mother Bloor served a jail sentence in Nebraska for having helped organize a farmer's union. She could have been set free by paying the fine, but rejected the offer, because her comrades in jail were given no such opportunity. Mother Bloor still tours the country and when necessary, she even hitchhikes to reach some strike area or farmers' meeting. Such a woman deserves all the honor and affection her many "children" can heap upon her. On January 24, at the Hotel Lismore, New York, a committee of her admirers are giving her an anniversary banquet to mark her forty-five years of activity on the side of the American people. It ought to be a memorable evening, since a United Front of poets, artists, labor leaders, workers and intellectuals of every political camp will be present. May this remarkable woman soon finish the autobiography on which she is working and may she continue to mother us for many a long year!

A Letter from the Front

"SOME days ago, a resident of Genoa received a letter from an Italian officer stationed in Ethiopia," reports Le Travail, a labor paper of Geneva. "The letter had been sent from a little town occupied for a short time by Marshal Badoglio's troops.

> "The country is very beautiful," the letter stated in part, "the climate tolerable and the morale excellent. Things are going quite well. Please take care to preserve the stamps on the envelope as they will surely have special value when we have conquered Ethiopia." The man who received this letter, surprised by the last sentence and knowing that his friend was no philatelist, removed the stamps from the envelope with great care. Behind them, he found these words: "We are in hell, we're dying by the thousands!"

MORE and more the Italian masses are becoming conscious of the hell their fathers and brothers, husbands and sons are facing in Ethiopia. More and more such stories as the one reported above are filtering back home and are having their effect on soldiers about to leave for Africa. Two regiments mutinied several weeks ago in a southern port. Similar uprisings are reported in Luge, Romagna, where civilians fraternized with the troops. Three battalions of Italian Alpine soldiers revolted in a railroad station at Turin and only entrained at the points of bayonets after several shots had been fired. This week John L. Spivak gives an eye-witness account of deserters. And not only are the peasants and w afraid of the African adventure: solini's brother-in-law, Mattaloni, gra officer of the Crown of Italy, has joine bankers, industrialists, even the royal family, in shipping gold abroad for safe-keeping in foreign banks—while Italian women are asked to sacrifice their wedding rings for "the glory of fascism." The much-vaunted Italian military machine has not only succeeded in winning no substantial victory in Ethiopia, but has been driven back by unequipped native troops. Now the "little" rainy season will impede the campaign still more. If Mussolini has any doubt about the unpopularity of the war he has only to look at the increasing disaffection in the army; if he has any doubt that his imperialist adventure is failing he has only to consider the bankers who are already deserting the sinking ship.

Third Scottsboro Trial

THREE times the Scottsboro boys have been brought before the Alabama courts and three times they have been condemned to the electric chair on framed evidence. Twice the United States Supreme Court has been forced by protest from all over the world to reverse the decision. But Alabama still clamors for the lives of the nine innocent Negroes; race hatred, intimidation, white ruling-class "pride" wants them to burn—regardless of evidence. The judge arbitrarily refused a transfer of the trial to a federal court where lynch tension would be somewhat lessened. In the trial that starts this week, the Scottsboro boys are supported by the strongest United Front yet to rally to the defense of civil rights, a United Front composed of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Methodist Federation for Social Service, the League for Industrial Democracy, the American Civil Liberties Union and the International Labor Defense. Mass indignation won Angelo Herndon his liberty from the Georgia chain gang—though the case is still being appealed by the prosecution. Alabama desires the lives of the Scottsboro boys as "an example"—innocent or guilty; Negroes have no rights and when this tenet is challenged, the ruling-class of the South rallies to prevent "foreigners" from interfering with "law and order." But they face an organized, resolute opposition: the United Scottsboro Committee carries the fight for fundamental liberties one step farther.

New Masses

VOL. XVIII, No. 4 — CONTENTS — JANUARY 21, 1936

Editorial Comment 3
No Blank Check for Roosevelt
Michael Gold 6
Economic Prospects for 1936
John Strachey 8
J. P. Morgan Loves His Country
Joseph Freeman 9
Georgia Nightmare.....Edwin Rolfe 10
Mussolini's Soldiers Are Deserting
John L. Spivak 11
The People vs. War.....Bruce Minton 13
The Soviets Transform the Village
Joshua Kunitz 15
Starve, Peasant!.....George Dixon 17
An Open Letter to Romain Rolland
Waldo Frank 19
The European Spirit.....Romain Rolland 20
The Marble Strike in Vermont
Sarah Cleghorn 21
Correspondence 23
Review and Comment
More Than Style....Josephine Herbst 24
Salvation Through Delerium
Victor Burtt 25
A Decade in Review..Granville Hicks 26
Brief Review..... 27
That's Their Story
Margaret Wright Mather 27
The Theater:
Poison at the Booth—and an Antidote
Stanley Burnshaw 28
The Screen:
"Riffraff".....Owen Burke 29
Between Ourselves 30
Drawings
by Peggy Bacon, Russell T. Limbach, William Gropper, Charles Pollock, Anthony Colin, Lou R. MacLean.

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Published weekly by WEEKLY MASSES CO., INC., at 31 East 27th Street, New York City.

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Entered as second-class matter, June 24, 1926, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies 15 cents. Subscription $4.50 a year in U. S. and Colonies and Mexico. Six months $2.50; three months $1.25; Foreign $5.50 a year; six months $3; three months $1.50. Subscribers are notified that no change in address can be effected in less than two weeks. THE NEW MASSES welcomes the work of new writers in prose and verse, and of artists. Manuscripts and drawings must be accompanied by return postage. THE NEW MASSES pays for contributions.

173

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No Blank Check for Roosevelt

MICHAEL GOLD

THE weather for 1936 on the North American continent can be predicted by any amateur forecaster. It will be loud with oratorical thunder; fog-bound with dripping drifts and shoals of vague, vast, empty ideas; and rank with the poison-gas emanated by regiments of political charlatans.

It is to be a wild year, a Presidential year, and one that will take its place in history with the elections of Jackson, Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson.

That sly old mandarin, James Farley, chairman of the Democratic Committee, has already warned his henchmen to prepare for one of the dirtiest campaigns on record and Mr. Farley, an accomplished veteran of the Tammany rough-and-tumble, should know.

The most militant profit-takers of the nation, those capitalists who are psychologically ripe for fascism in America, are arraying all their black cavalry of huge campaign funds, venomous press-agentry, slander, bribery and sheer brutal force against the reelection of Franklin Roosevelt.

The standard price of an American vote has almost always been two dollars and a bad cigar and the reactionaries could ordinarily have bought and bullied their way to an easy victory. But this is no ordinary time. There are some twenty million bankrupt people in America. Their government relief and project-jobs are more important to them than a two-spot or a chunk of the fascist east wind. They are almost as numerous as the rest of the voters. Roosevelt promises them some sort of continuance of the dole-system; but the Republicans try to win them by threatening their bitter bread and butter and promising lower taxes and a balanced budget to people who can't buy a pint of milk for their babies.

It is the unemployed who may swing this election. Will they vote for Roosevelt? Will he be reelected, despite what the Literary Digest, which circulates among affluent people with ten cents to spare for reading matter, may assure us?

The great danger in this campaign, as I see it, may be the liquidation of the groping but genuine liberalism and labor-party sentiment there is in America. Because Roosevelt is being so fiercely attacked by the emergent fascist forces, great blocs of liberal and labor-party strength are preparing to support him. They see him as the inadequate, but solitary bulwark they have remaining against an American fascism.

Are they right in their fears and hopes? President Roosevelt has made many superb gestures toward liberalism, but why, after every step forward, has he always done the classic thing for such liberals and taken two steps backward?

"I recommend to the Congress that we advance and that we do not retreat," the President proudly declared in his memorable annual message. But in what seemed the next breath of the same declaration, he promised to cut the relief appropriations sharply and to put an end to any further taxation of the great swollen corporations that have managed to increase their profits through the depression. Could the Liberty League have asked for more? Could the unemployed have expected less?

In his Jackson Day dinner speech, the President threw out another proud slogan: "The basic issue in this campaign will be the retention of popular government"—in sum, a gesture of war against fascism. But this was in the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D. C. before two thousand machine Democrats and businessmen who had paid $50 a plate for their dinners.

Why hasn't the President impressed this same ideal on his own follower, the Democratic governor of Indiana, who for months has employed fascist martial law to cow the people of Terre Haute?

How about Tampa, Florida, where the Ku Kluxers and Democratic politicians have murdered a Socialist unemployed leader, Joseph Shoemaker? How about Mr. Roosevelt's own army and navy department chiefs, that are pushing the Tydings-McCormack Disaffection Bill, a typical Hearstian-Hitler attack on freedom of speech and press? He has been silent in everyone of the too numerous specific assaults on popular government.

Woodrow Wilson was another liberal Democrat, elected on his promises to keep us out of the World War. But as the Nye investigation is revealing, Wilson was secretly close to the House of Morgan, that needed to take us into the war to cover its investments abroad. President Roosevelt promises to fight for the "retention of popular government." Let us hope he may keep his word better than that other man of the shining liberal word.

It is a great gamble the liberals will make who support Roosevelt. Let them at least know they are only gambling. To put the proposition bluntly: it is dangerous to write out a blank check for any candidate of the Democratic Party, a party as much allied to big business, fascism and war as is the Republican Party. It is safer to build a *new* party — a Farmer-Labor Party that will gather all the bewildered rebel forces of the plain people; that will include Townsendites, Epic Leagues, Commonwealth Leagues, Utopians; and the American Federation of Labor unions, Socialists, Communists, the leagues of small business men and professions, all the scattered forces of real democracy that united can increase their influence a hundredfold.

Such a new party might not win the next election. It might not even nominate a presidential candidate to oppose Roosevelt. But if it could roll up ten million votes and elect a hundred of its own congressmen, it would have a tremendous pressure value on President Roosevelt, after his reelection. He needs this pressure from the Left, to overcome the pressure from the Right which he yields to so often and easily. Can he be forced to fight fascism or make the rich pay for the depression they have caused? A blank check for Roosevelt in this campaign will be a defeat for liberalism in America. Even those liberals and labor people who plan to support him ought to remember the story of Woodrow Wilson and be faithful to principle and not to men. They have only one sure guarantee against the vacillations of a Roosevelt and that is, a new Farmer-Labor Party.

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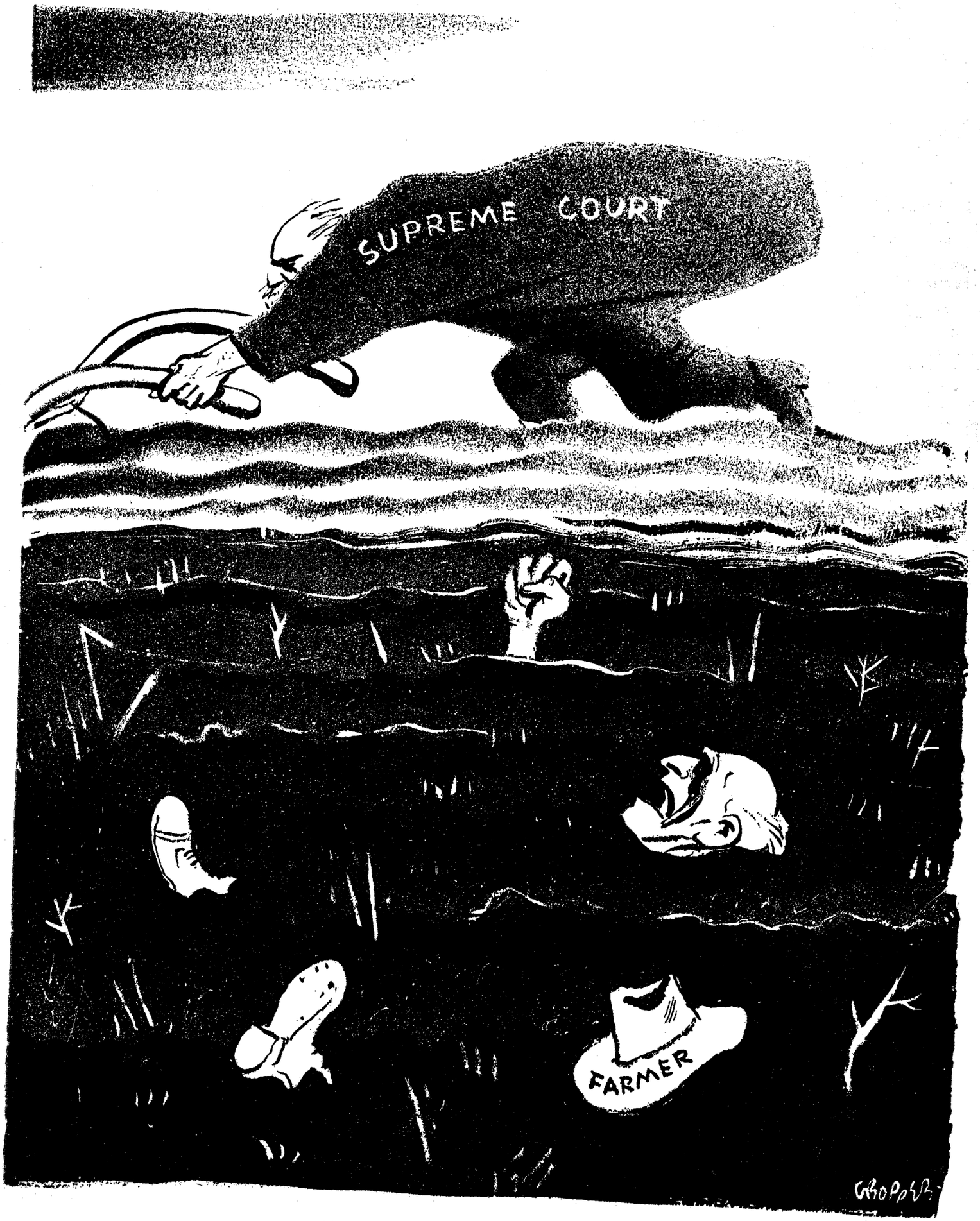

PLOWED UNDER

William Gropper

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Economic Prospects for 1936

JOHN STRACHEY

LONDON, Jan. 13.

LAST week I attempted to give a list of the favorable factors in the political prospects of the working class. This week I should like to supplement that estimate with a few speculations about the economic situation.

What will happen both in America and in Europe during 1936 on the hypothesis that no major war breaks out? Of course if any two of the great powers become involved in a major war the whole economic prospect is changed and all speculation becomes entirely impossible. Will the present decided but extremely uneven upward movement of world capitalism continue or will there be a new cyclical crisis before the end of the year? I am inclined to think that unless events in America take a new turn the upward movement will continue through 1936. Here in Great Britain we seem to be entering what I should call the hectic stage of recovery.

Economic activity is increasing more and more rapidly (although as everywhere the effect of this increase on the level of unemployment is surprisingly small) but signs of the exhaustion of some of the more important factors in the recovery are beginning to show. For example it is reported this week that the demand for houses, which has been one of the great factors of the recovery, is showing signs of exhaustion. Hence, the end of the upward movement seems to me to be coming into sight.

But the end will not come, I think, in 1936. After all on the ordinary calculation that the trade cycle is one of ten years, the slump is not due until 1939. On the other hand, there is a good deal of evidence that the cycle is now shorter. The last cycle was only eight years in length—from 1921 to 1929. Hence one might guess that if it is left to itself the present upward movement in Britain will last for this and perhaps the next year but not for very much longer. But will it be left to itself?

Although world capitalism is far more broken up than it was during the upward movement of the 1920's, although each national capitalism is today moving in growing independence of its neighbors (and this is one of the major signs of the disintegration of world capitalism), yet there is of course still a good deal of reaction between the different national systems.

British capitalism is especially affected by what happens in America. American industries are still incomparably the greatest conquerors of raw material in the world. Hence, whether a large-scale recovery or a check in America will profoundly affect economic prospects in Britain.

And what is going to happen in America? Naturally Americans are far better able to judge of this than we are over here but it may possibly interest readers of THE NEW MASSES to hear what the recent decision of the Supreme Court and the general attack of big business on the New Deal looks like to us over here. To us it appears that the great reactionary business forces which rule America have come to the conclusion that they are once more strong enough to do without the whole structure of subsidies, doles, social services and the like by the improvization of which President Roosevelt staved off collapse in America three years ago. It is evident that the governing class of America feels that good times have come again, that their system is saved and that they can now throw away the expensive and to them thoroughly distasteful crutches of social services, subsidies and the like which they were forced to use in their hour of need. They evidently believe that the mere act of scrapping the whole structure of social-reform measures will so intensify the recovery by increasing business confidence that there will be sufficient reemployment to make doles and subsidies unnecessary. But will it?

The whole thing seems to me a gigantic gamble. I can follow the American capitalists' reasoning: they think, for example, that the scrapping of the vast subsidies which have been paid to American farmers will result in such a boom that millions more workers will be employed, that these workers will spend their wages on farm products and that, therefore, the farmers will be saved and will be able to do without their subsidies. In the same way, they calculate the workers will be able to do without their relief because a proportion of them, at any rate, will get work and wages. This conclusion, it is clear, depends upon a wave of business confidence hitting the country as a result of the Supreme Court's decision.

Lou R. MacLean

What will happen if these conclusions go astray? What will happen if the recovery only goes on at about its present level, leaving the twelve million workers unemployed—the twenty-odd million American citizens existing on some form or other of government relief? This must mean that the market for American foodstuffs will be too small for the American farmers to have any hope of making ends meet once the vast subsidies which Roosevelt has been giving them are withdrawn. So far as I can see, if this happens the unemployed of America will be faced with starvation and the farmers with ruin. For these reasons the torpedoing of the whole of the Roosevelt policy by the ultra-reactionary forces in America seems to me one of the most risky gambles which a capitalist class has ever embarked upon. But then the American governing class has never had much need for wisdom, caution and real statesmanship. Right up until 1929 it never had to face a really difficult situation. American capitalism was triumphantly in the ascendant. It was all plain sailing as we can now all see. It is true that when the slump hit them in 1929 the American capitalists had the luck or skill to throw up just the right type of leader to save them. President Roosevelt, one of the cleverest, most adroit, coolest and—be it added—most cynical of liberal-capitalist leaders, knew just what to say and do to save the system from the really formidable though blind and incoherent revolt which was gathering in 1931-32-33.

I cannot see the British governing class making the mistake of trying to sack such a leader as this before it was very considerably further out of the wood than are the American capitalists as yet. Still it is a gamble which may come off. It may be that, aided by the highly inflationary policy of ultra-cheap lending to every form of private enterprise, the recovery can be accelerated sufficiently to prevent any social crisis. If so we shall, I think, see the American recovery spiraling up to a very high point. It will be recovery of a very special character which will leave millions and millions of American citizens in the bitterest destitution. But it will be a recovery in which astronomical profits will be made and a tremendous demand for raw materials all over the world will be set up. If this happens we may get a year or two in which world capitalism appears to be entering another period of relative stability and prosperity comparable to the 1920's. But in fact it will be a much more hectic, less enduring, less solid type of prosperity. And when long before 1940 the crash comes it will far eclipse anything which we have yet witnessed.

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J. P. Morgan Loves His Country

JOSEPH FREEMAN

WASHINGTON, D. C.

ORNATE ROMAN columns sustain the caucus room in the Senate Office Building. From the high ceiling the chandeliers hang like monstrous glass grapes. Here in the summer of 1917, our overlords held the lottery of death which determined which of the men caught in the first draft should be shipped off first to be killed on the Western Front. In this same room, sixteen years later, J. P. Morgan laughed at the Senate Stock Exchange Inquiry by dangling a midget from his knee. Now the banker is again imperturbably facing the ornate Roman columns. He puffs his curved pipe, smiling as the Nye committee, investigating munitions, fires questions at him and his partners designed to show that Morgan and Company deliberately hurled America into the war in order to secure its vast loans to the Allies.

Watching the progress of the inquiry, I could hardly believe that events of the greatest importance to mankind in general and the American people in particular were under microscopic scrutiny. The atmosphere was one of pleasant after-dinner table talk. There was no Untermyer, Walsh or Pecora to pursue a line of questions without fear or quarter to its relentless conclusion. For the most part, the world's biggest financiers were examined by the Senate committee's experts, sincere young intellectuals in the liberal tradition who asked for information in respectful tones.

Pure reason made no visible dent upon the granite wills of the men on the stand. J. P. Morgan, huge, heavy, bald, with white hair and mustache, a wing collar and broad paunch, sat massive in his chair, silent or chuckling as occasion demanded. Lank George Whitney, brother of the Stock Exchange president, leaned across the table ready to trip up any examiner. Thomas W. Lamont, shrewdest of the Morgan partners, fastened his merciless blue eyes on the committee, always replying with deceptive softness, never missing an opportunity to divert the investigation into channels which suited him best.

Occasionally, Senator Nye cleared up a point in a pleasant bass. Plump, red-cheeked Bennet Clark of Missouri, son of the Champ Clark whom Woodrow Wilson deprived of the Democratic nomination, was the most aggressive examiner at the committee table. But the general attitude in that quarter was respectful. On the other hand, Mr. Morgan, exchanging pleasantries with us at the press table, said, shaking with huge laughter:

"I don't want to hurt the Senate."

He said it simply, as one who out of generosity refrained from avenging himself on a gnat. He knows the committee must conduct the inquiry according to the rules of the game which are loaded in favor of the bankers. The Senators have only such documents from the Morgan files as the firm let them have. Nor can they question the premises of the existing social order. Under the rules, selling instruments with which men kill each other by the millions is legitimate business.

When the hearings opened on Tuesday, amidst flashlights and movie cameras, Mr. Morgan read a "personal statement" into the record. He recalled, not without the appropriate pathos, Germany's "unexpected and criminal invasion of Belgium." This act had "shocked" the House of Morgan. In spite of President Wilson's plea for neutrality, the bankers could not remain impartial as "between right and wrong." Mr. Morgan and his partners thereupon resolved that "we should do all in our power to help the Allies win the war as soon as possible."

They kept their resolution in a manner clearly indicated by the documents submitted by the Nye Committee—letters, cables and telegrams taken from the White House, the State Department, the Treasury and Morgan and Company itself. Out of the welter of detail submitted at the hearing, the following story emerged:

IN AUGUST, 1914, Morgan and Company asked the State Department whether there would be any objection to their making a loan to the French government. Bryan, then Secretary of State, consulted Lansing, then the department's counsellor. Lansing said there was no legal objection. But Bryan, spokesman for the isolationist agrarian interests of the West, urged Wilson to embargo loans to the belligerent nations. Money, he pointed out, was the worst of all contrabands because it commanded everything else. America's refusal to make loans would naturally hasten the end of the war. Moreover, he argued:

> the powerful financial interests which would be connected with these loans would be tempted to use their influence through the newspapers to support the interests of the government to which they had loaned, because the value of the security would be directly affected by the result of the war. . . . All of this influence would make it all the more difficult for us to maintain neutrality.

Bryan's warning was disregarded. Senator Nye tried to show that the bankers pressed the government to fix a definite policy in regard to foreign credits. A memorandum by Lansing, introduced into the record, revealed that Wilson himself made the concession which the bankers wanted. A subtle distinction was drawn between floating foreign bonds in this country and establishing commercial credits.

The United States was formally neutral. Nevertheless, the officially-sanctioned commercial credits affected only the Allies. Early in the war, Morgan and Company had become purchasing agent for the British government in this country. In the spring of 1915, the bankers signed a similar agreement with the French government. On behalf of these mammoth customers, the House of Morgan ordered here about three billion dollars' worth of materials, for which they received a commission of $30,000,000.

Morgan may have been shocked by the German "lust for world domination"; but he now had a more tangible reason for supporting the cause of the Allies. Morgan and Company were not only purchasing agents for the British and French. They also owned or controlled many of the firms from which they ordered war materials. And they were bankers. Where would the Allies find the money with which to purchase three billion dollars' worth of goods here? At first the Allies sent over immense sums in gold and securities. But you cannot carry on so tremendous a business in cash. The British and French governments "consulted" Morgan and Company and the bankers "helped" them find the money here.

At the outbreak of the European conflict, America was in a state of economic depression. Purchase of war materials by the Allies stimulated industry to an unprecedented degree. Charts submitted by Robert Wohlforth, of committee counsel, showed that during the years 1915 to 1917 inclusive, the American export trade in arms, munitions, steel and other war materials totalled $2,187,000,000. Of this total, the Morgan firm handled $1,843,000,000 or *eighty-four per cent.*

The evidence also showed with what tenacity and skill the House of Morgan carried on its traffic in the instruments of death. On behalf of the British government, the bankers placed orders here for 4,400,000 rifles. When Winchester Arms found some difficulty in meeting its share of the orders, Morgan and Company compelled it to expand the plant. Other documents showed that Morgan forced the British to accept $55,000,000 worth of rifles which they did not want.

The House of Morgan was exporting munitions to the Allies; it was financing the Allies. The biggest bankers and manufacturers in the United States were investing heavily in one side of the war. In his "personal statement," J. P. Morgan had at-

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tributed America's entrance into the war to Germany's "insults and injuries." There are some things, he said loftily, which are "better to die for than to live without, and a nation's self-respect and independence are two of them." Now evidence was accumulating in the Roman caucus room to show that bankers may be animated by motives other than love of country.

What had happened was clearly this: In August, 1914, the Wilson administration had discouraged loans to belligerents. The bankers had observed this prohibition, but had arranged with Wilson to grant the Allies commercial credits. On this basis, Morgan and Company had created a war industry of such colossal proportions that it could not possibly be carried on *without* loans to the Allies. The bankers were thus in a position to force a reversal of the policy on loans. The Nye Committee revealed how this was done.

ON THE witness stand, the Morgan partners admitted that in 1915 they had supported the pound sterling exchange. In August of that year, the pound began to decline. The Allies had incurred millions of the dollars of American debts for munitions and other supplies. The drop in sterling exchange imperilled those debts. Indeed, Lansing and McAdoo threatened that the situation imperilled the entire foreign-trade structure of America. The Secretary of the Treasury "bluntly" wrote to the President that he had Great Britain in mind. Britain, he said, "is and always has been our best customer." The government must do "everything it could to assist our customers to buy."

But Britain was not buying through Washington. It was buying through 23 Wall Street. Who had created that grave situation which called for a reversal of the policy on loans?

"I say," Senator Clark rapped out, "that the break in the exchange market was the leverage used on the administration."

Removing his curved pipe, J. P. Morgan leaned out of his wide wing collar. For the first time he became angry, as men sometimes will when confronted with an unpleasant truth. But the evidence read into the record tended to substantiate the Senate Committee's charge *the House of Morgan deliberately created a slump in the British exchange in August, 1915 in order to compel Wilson to abandon his official neutrality policy.*

Actually, the President, like J. P. Morgan, was pro-British from the outbreak of the war. But he was a politician who had to save his face. His notes to Germany on the Lusitania were calculated to draw America into the war. Bryan, anxious for peace, resigned as Secretary of State on June 8. The cunning Lansing took his place. From August 13 to September 2 the House of Morgan ceased to support the pound, alarming the administration. On September 2 it was announced that the Anglo-French Joint High Commission headed by Lord Reading was coming to America to negotiate a loan. On September 6 Secretary Lansing wrote the President that the embargo on loans announced early in the war was now a source of embarrassment.

> We are face to face [Lansing wrote] with what appears to be a critical economic situation which can only be relieved apparently by the investment of American capital in foreign loans to be used in liquidating the enormous balance of trade in favor of the United States.

Morgan's deliberate withdrawal of support from the British pound had the desired effect. On September 11, Wilson declared in a public speech:

> Neutrality is a negative word. It is a word that does not express what America ought to feel. America has a heart and that heart throbs with all sorts of intense sympathies.

It was the Morgan pocket that was throbbing intensely. The President was making the first public sales talk for the proposed loan to the Allies. Three days later, the House of Morgan signed a contract with the Reading Commission for a loan of $500,000,000, the largest until then in American history. At first there was considerable sales resistance in various parts of the country to the bonds; but the bankers embarked upon a very effective campaign of "education" to induce people to invest in the arms of the Allies.

THE road to the Western Front was now appallingly clear. The following year the American people had a chance to vote on the question of war. The committee asked Morgan to give his interpretation of Wilson's re-election in 1916. The banker blandly admitted it showed *"that the majority of the people did not want us to go into the war."*

The people did not want war, but J. P. Morgan thought there were some things for which it was better that other people should die.

In the lobby I stopped Senator Nye and asked him for his impressions of the inquiry so far.

"It would be improper," he said, "for me to state any final conclusions while the record is incomplete. But as the evidence accumulates, I get more and more the impression that from the beginning of the European conflict, the bankers, the industrialists, the manufacturers—not only Morgan and Company but others, too—drew our country into the war step by step."

After investigator Wohlforth had established that Morgan and Company handled eighty-four percent of America's export trade in war materials, he asked the bankers:

"Was this money paid?"

"Yes," George Whitney replied, "in every instance the money was paid."

The Allies still owe the American taxpayers great sums on government loans. The House of Morgan collected every cent of the millions it made in war profits. And between sessions of the munitions committee I heard the House of Representatives wrangling over the bonus long due to the men lured and driven into a war which, according to Mr. Morgan, the majority of the American people did not want.

Georgia Nightmare

There are sixteen bodies of lifeless men
swaying a little in a slow wind,
outlined against a gray torpid sky.
They sway gently, a little, to and fro,
black against the dull unmoving sky.
These are no silhouettes, friend learning
life:
these are men's bodies
hung against the sky.

I walked yesterday in a dream
through a night-forest where no light
penetrated, where no bright
fireflies flickered above the stream
that labored sluggishly through the night.
Through dank branches I labored, like the
stream,
over dead twigs that groaned under my feet,
over muddy swampland that coveted my
body
and after numberless uncounted hours
I reached a clearing, strange in the
darkness,
where a tree stood like an isolated tower,
growing purple up into a flaming sky.
And I looked up, and higher, and saw
sixteen black bodies strung against the sky.

The forest falls, the stream runs dry,
the tree rots visibly to the ground;
nothing remains but sixteen black
bodies against a blood-red sky.

I see crazy mountains in the distance,
crazily moving (mountains do not move);
each one snowcapped, white in the distance,
peaked to a pinpoint, coming nearer—
imagine mountains moving to a man!—
moving to me, alone in this weird land,
moving to me, shrinking to the sand.
Martial music rasps through a brass band
and off with the snowcaps,
off with the mountains!
A million faces leering in the sun!
Then I see a gun,
then two, and three—a thousand!
RUN!

A heavy rope is flung into the skies,
a heavy rope hangs tautly from a tree,
a black man strangles above a sea of eyes.
The black man looks like me.

EDWIN ROLFE.

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Mussolini's Soldiers Are Deserting

JOHN L. SPIVAK

PARIS.

PEOPLE who are too curious about an army's morale in time of war have been known to look at the muzzles of rifles when they saw their last dawn. But the Italian papers were filled with stories about the thousands who were rushing to volunteer for the army, of marching soldiers singing as they left for Africa, of a wild enthusiastic support for the Ethiopian venture so that although I had no particular yearning to face a squad on some cheerless morning, I boarded a troop train going to Naples.

It was crowded with soldiers and civilians going to see relatives off. There were eight of us in the third-class compartment where soldiers ride and one young girl of eighteen or twenty with a marriage ring on her finger. Her face was white and periodically she blinked her eyes rapidly as though trying to keep back the tears.

"Where are you from?" I asked the soldier nearest the window.

"Milan."

"Volunteer?"

"No," he said shortly.

He had worked in a garage there and through good times and bad had somehow managed to get along. Then this war came and here he was in uniform on his way to kill Ethiopians. He had never heard of Ethiopians before.

"Do you like to go there?" I asked.

He shot me a startled look and glanced at the other soldiers and the officers passing in the corridor outside of our compartment. He did not answer.

"You are going to Naples, too?" I asked the girl.

She nodded, blinking her eyes rapidly. Suddenly she rose and went outside to the women's room. She had done that twice before, each time returning with her eyes obviously washed.

A young man, resplendent in a neatly-pressed uniform and dangling a dagger from his belt squeezed into the compartment and sat opposite me. There was a tiny red cross on his brown helmet.

"Red Cross?" I asked.

"Yes," he smiled in a friendly fashion.

"But there are no casualties in the Italian army!"

He and the other soldiers laughed heartily.

"You're going to Ethiopia to save the wounded? Do you need a dagger to save them?"

"I might need it to save myself," he said, flushing. "The Ethiopians are savages."

"But I thought the International Red Cross regulations prohibit Red Cross nurses from carrying any sort of arms?"

"I do not know what the regulations prohibit. I know only that we were given daggers." He looked at me and added with a wink: "Maybe we will be given something else in Eritrea."

A lieutenant, looking as though he had just stepped out of a store window passed by, apparently looking over his men. He paused in the open doorway of the compartment and since I was about to light a cigarette I offered him one.

"Ah, Americain, eh? Good cigarettes," he said, gladly accepting one.

He was familiar with the region and pointed out the ruins of the ancient Roman water system that flashed by.

"You'll probably wish for even a ruined water system in Africa," I grinned.

"Oh, we shall have water," he said confidently. He had volunteered, he told me.

"Why did you?" I asked.

"To civilize savages!"

I looked at him in obvious disbelief and he laughed.

"Yes, that is true. Then my country needs me. We must have land. And then again I had no work and I love to sing and be gay. What have I to do at home? In Eritrea I shall get many lire a month. I cannot spend it so when I come back I shall have thousands of lire and then—" The look that he gave me intimated that then he would paint the town red.

THE newspaper stories of volunteers are true, but the papers do not say that most of them had no work and many of them were eating only once a day and in the army they would be fed three times a day. It is true that soldiers leave for the front with some of them singing, but since the anti-fascists do not dare to open their mouths, that makes the enthusiasm apparently unanimous. It is true that there have been wildly enthusiastic demonstrations in Rome in support of the Ethiopian "expedition" as every one prefers to call the war, but Rome is not Italy. In other cities where I have seen soldiers entrain there was no singing. From Rome, where the foreign correspondents and most of the visitors are, come the reports of enthusiasm but you do not see a line in the papers of the desertions or of the dead and the wounded or of the store in Rome that was closed with a sign on its doors that it was in memory of the owner's son who was killed fighting in Ethiopia. There is nothing in the papers that the storekeeper was ordered to reopen it and remove the sign under threat of immediate arrest and imprisonment.

There is no real desire for war among the Italians with whom I talked. The only ones who go about breathing fire from their nostrils are the younger fascists, those who grew to maturity knowing only what the regime wanted them to know and trained in the faith that anything Mussolini says must be obeyed. Ethiopia to them means nothing except that it is a land of savages which Il Duce wants conquered so that Italy can become as great a power as ancient Rome.

They do not know the world's attitude towards them. Italy is pictured in the controlled press as the lover of peace, the victim of a conspiracy engineered by England and since they are permitted to read only the officially censored press there has developed, even among those who do not approve of the war, a genuine hatred of England.

In those tense days when England and Italy were mustering their naval strength in the Mediterranean and it seemed that war might break out at any hour, the sentiment perceptibly swung toward support of Italy. The fascist press campaign harped on England always being colony-hungry and without saying it in so many words gave the impression that England wanted to destroy fascism in order to seize Italy's African colonies and thus impoverish the land still more.

One middle-aged man with whom I talked stamped his cane furiously. "I myself will go!" he shouted. "Italy shall never be an English colony. They have enough colonies and now they want our Italy! Italy is poor. Italy is hungry. Italy has its woes—oh, so many woes! But it will never submit to being an English colony!"

"Who said England wants Italy for a colony?"

"Why, then, does she seek a war with us?" he demanded.

And so the propaganda continues, by press, radio and word-of-mouth to win the people's support to this desperate venture. The people know that they are hungry but they do not realize that Mussolini, faced with the imminent collapse of his regime because of the condition of Italian industry, the disintegration of the middle class and the increasing unrest among workers reduced to less than a subsistence level was virtually compelled to make this gamble for Ethiopia. With that land in his grasp he evidently fancies he would have a place for his unemployed, he would have raw materials which Italy sorely needs and could borrow money from the world's bankers on the conquered country's undeveloped resources. Because the fascist theory of the corporate state has proved unworkable he has launched a war. Probably he never even hears of the baby the wife of Albine Dal Bo had in Turin or of

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old man in Milan whose son had deserted or of the countless cases like them.

YOU climb five stone flights in the dark halls of the building at Via Mazzini, 32 and turn into a still darker corridor to get to the young wife of Albine Dal Bo. Like so many workers' homes, it is spotless. The walls are covered with gay prints. You have to bend low as you enter, for the home is a garret and the roof slopes so sharply that the only place you can stand upright is in the center near the lone window. There are only two rooms here, the living room and the bedroom, with a cross over the bed.

There are just herself and her baby born at the very hour that her husband left Turin for the wastes of Africa. "Eight-thirty the train left and at eight-thirty the little bambino was born," she explains. "No, his father has never seen even a picture of him. I have no money for that."

"Did he enlist?"

"No, no, no," she says, shaking her head violently. "They tell him 'You must go to Africa to fight.' He says, 'But I have just come from Venezzia looking for work. There is no work in my Venezzia and for two months I hunt for it here every day. Now I have found it. It is not enough for me and my wife and the child that is coming but it is work and so we will live very poor—so, here in this garret. We do not bother anybody. Now I want to stay and work—' "

In her intensity she tried to use her hands and the sleeping baby in her arms awoke and began to cry.

"How do you live?" I asked.

"For two months I have a bread card. Now I have found work. I have just got work." There was an almost hysterical happiness in her voice over this fact. "Today, just before you came I have found work. My sister was here taking care of the baby."

"And your husband?"

"I got one letter. He is ill with the fever. I do not know what has happened to him. . . . Every morning I pray," she said simply, looking at the cross over her bed.

SINCE Italy is surrounded on three sides by water the only place from which Italians can desert, outside of Africa, is at the northern frontier. The majority of Italians cannot get there because of police regulations which keep tab on their movements from city to city. But those who are near the border have been deserting steadily ever since the first call to colors was issued.

At the Ministry of Press and Propaganda, at a Fascist Party headquarters, wherever you go in official Italy they laugh when you ask about the rumors that soldiers are deserting. But if you go to Brenner Pass which cuts a deep cleft in the Tyrols on the Italian-Austrian border you understand why Italy is desperately trying to suppress news of the stream of desertions.

An Innsbruck garage mechanic who had lived on a farm in the shadow of the Pass most of his life and knew every foot of the country came with me as my guide.

He drove me out to the wayside shrine about seven miles from the border. The sun had set hours before and it was cold in the snow-capped mountains.

"They are always cold and hungry when they come," he said when he parked the car under a towering cliff. "They have had a long climb and sometimes they have been in the mountains for two, maybe three days, with only snow to drink, for the streams are watched by the Italians. Yes, it is best that we sit here, for if we are too near the border then we may not see them for they walk far before they come into the open road to be certain they are in Austria."

We sat there with lights dimmed while he told me in low tones of the soldiers in uniform and in civilian clothes who had been straggling over the Pass since early summer.

"There are many. They come from Brennero to Innsbruck, sometimes walking the whole way but often an auto or an ox cart will pick them up and take them as far as they go; and sometimes the farmers have pity and give them hot food, for in the night it is cold. That you can see for yourself."

He looked at me as though he thought I wanted to argue with him about the coldness. When he saw that I agreed heartily he continued:

"They come, too, in the east Tyrols where the mountains are sharp like broken glass. There they cross to Sillian and go to Lienz."

A luxurious car with powerful lights purred past. A cheerful yellow light that gleamed in some farmhouse window deep in the valley below went out and with that light extinguished, the stillness somehow seemed more profound.

"In Africa the sun is hot," my guide volunteered suddenly, "so hot that the water always boils and only blacks can drink boiling water. The Italians must have it cooled first but there is no ice or snow there. So they die of thirst while water boils."

"Who told you that?"

"Why, everybody knows it," he said with an air of surprise.

An hour passed and as the stars grew clearer the night grew colder. I had brought a thermos bottle filled with hot coffee—a delicacy to Italians—and some ham sandwiches for whosoever came over the Pass. Nothing disturbed the stillness. Even cars had ceased to pass.

"In Innsbruck the papers used to print reports of these deserters but now it is always the same so they do not print it any more. Every day some appear at the Bundes-polizei and the polizei say they are running away on the French border and to Switzerland and from Trieste. Have you heard?"

"Yes, I have heard. I talked with Dr. Vitus Windhofer, the head of the local Bundes-polizei—"

"You talked with him—personally? Oh, journalists talk with everybody, don't they? Even the head of the Bundes-polizei. . . . And what did he tell you?" he asked eagerly.

"Many soldiers have run away. How many they do not know for not all report to the Bundes-polizei but they estimate that about 2,600 have fled acoss the frontier since summer. Most of them go to Germany and some remain and become Austrians. Of those who fled about one in every twenty was already in uniform. The others had only been called to service."

"There are many in Innsbruck—"

Suddenly he clutched my arm. "See," he whispered a little proudly. "There is one!"

A shadowy figure was approaching, slowly rubbing his hands to keep warm. A drab green cape was thrown over his shoulder like an ancient Roman toga.

"Hello!" my guide shouted.

The soldier stared slightly but came forward. He looked half frozen as he came into the radius of the dimmed lights.

"Here," I said, offering him the coffee and sandwiches. "This will make you feel better."

He drank and ate greedily, nodding his head repeatedly in gratitude.

"How far am I from Innsbruck?"

"About an hour by car. We'll drive you in."

"Grazzitante," he said, his eyes lighting up.

"Have you any friends coming or are you alone?"

"I am alone. There are others but I did not see them. I did not see anyone. When I heard a sound I hid. It is two nights since I ran into the mountains."

"How did you ever find your way?"

He turned to a jagged, snow covered peak. "'There is Austria' we used to say to one another and so I went towards that mountain. They were high and there were many streams to cross."

He was happy at having been met so unexpectedly and with his stomach filled he talked of the dissatisfaction in the ranks, especially among the soldiers who came from the South Tyrol.

"What will you do now?"

"Go to Germany. I heard that Germany is taking us and giving us work. We used to talk about it when the blackshirts were not listening. But maybe I will go to jail for I have no passport."

He shrugged his shoulders and added lightly, "That's better than dying in Africa, eh?"

"You won't have to go to jail," I assured him. "The Bundes-polizei will give you a slip of paper which will be as good as a passport and you can stay here or go to Germany. You will find that no one will bother you."

"They won't?"

"No. They are not especially fond of

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Italy and you will be welcomed like one of their own sons."

There are about 70,000 soldiers along the Austrian frontier and among those with whom the deserter came in contact and those with whom the Bundes-polizei talked, there was a pronounced feeling that if they had to be in the army it was better to be on the Austrian frontier than in Africa. Most of the soldiers do not know French or German and though they are unhappy they feel that at least they are not aliens in an alien land. Of the deserters the overwhelming majority originated from territory which had once been Austrian. They still feel themselves Austrians and Austrian officials do not try to hide their willingness to welcome these former sons.

"Many," said the deserter, "are afraid to run away because of what might happen to their families left in Italy."

"Is it hard to slip away?"

He grinned and shook his head. "You watch for a guard who is friendly and then you walk into the mountains. When they see you going off some distance they turn their backs."

We left him at the station, a strange figure in the green toga, bowing deeply and repeating: "Grazzitante! Grazzitante!"

I DO not know what will happen to those whom this soldier left behind in a small village near Bari, but I could not help think of the old man with whom I had talked in Milan on the fourteenth anniversary of the fascist regime. While all Italy had a legal holiday and blackshirts swaggered through the streets, he was leaning dejectedly against a wall of the railroad station and staring blankly at the people who passed.

"The stores are all closed today?" I asked.

"Yes," he returned absently.

"Are things very expensive here?"

"Yes. Very." He looked me over warily.

"How do people live when they earn so little?"

He shrugged his shoulders without answering. I had told him I was an American and abruptly he asked: "America will not let Italians in any more?"

"I don't know. Some Italians come to America."

He shook his head slowly. "Even if they did I have no money to go."

"Why? Is it so bad here that you want to leave?"

He looked at me carefully for a moment and then turned around to make sure no one was near.

"It is bad. Very bad. We are hungry," he said simply.

"What are you doing about it?"

"What can we do?" he returned, looking around again.

"Can't you protest, ask for food?"

"To whom?" he smiled wearily. "We do not dare even to talk. You are an American so I talk. And it does not matter anyway," he added. There was a world of hopelessness in his voice.

"You have no work at all?"

"I had work. But now I have nothing. Not me or my wife. Three weeks ago I was called in and told 'For you there is no work—never again for you will there be work.' 'But I have worked here for seventeen years,' I said. 'Seventeen years and always a good worker, was I not?' 'Yes,' they said, 'but for you now there is no more work.' 'But why?' I asked. 'Your son is a traitor' they told me and then I learned that my son was waiting in Trieste to go to Africa and instead ran away to Jugoslavia."

He shook his head with a puzzled air.

"They came and took him. They told him he must fight savages in Africa but should he kill savages or be killed? They never tell me my son run away. I got no letter from him and nobody comes to tell me. They tell me only 'For you there is no more work.'"

Both of us stared at two celebrating fascists bedecked in their uniform walking arm in arm singing "Giovanezza."

"Should I run in the streets and cry my bitterness? That will not help for when I open my mouth, before even the people have heard me, there will be hands put over my mouth to silence me."

He shook his head and added as though talking to himself: "If we cannot work and people are afraid to shelter us then we must die, no?"

The People vs. War

The League Builds the United Front

BRUCE MINTON

I am not going to look backward anymore. The time to join hands to go forward is here.—MRS. VICTOR BERGER.

THE United Front came to Cleveland. It came to Cleveland to attend the Third United States Congress Against War and Fascism. For three days, delegates filled the hotels, twenty-two hundred men and women, representing nearly two million Americans. Every profession, every trade and occupation, every section of the country sent its spokesman to the Congress. Despite surface differences, America is uniting in one struggle against war and fascism. The nation is in accord with General Smedley Butler's words: "Another universal war will make man into a savage—a savage who will take by force what he wants—law or no law."

War and fascism! No longer remote dangers to be discussed academically in symposiums and debates. No longer the question of what the future *might* hold: it is imperative to mold the future now.

That is the meaning of the United Front. At Cleveland, the unity against common danger became more than an ideal. It is heartening to realize how many Americans have come to understand that persecution, the lowering of living standards, the defeat and destruction of culture, war, death, the end of liberty cannot be stopped by pious hopes and assurances that such things are "foreign" and "impossible in America." Delegates to the Third Congress were not willing merely to defend their liberties. They came to build an offensive, to strike before the enemy strikes, to kill the snake before it poisons America.

When the Congress recessed for a brief intermission, the delegates swarmed out of the auditorium into the semi-circular lobby. A farmer was telling a West Coast seaman about the United Farmers' League. "It's growing pretty big, y'know, and we put what we called a school on wheels out into the farm districts. Well, the big growers and fellers from the cities got together and smashed it. The sheriff, he comes along and arrests seventeen of our men for what he called riot. Thought they'd put 'em in jail and get rid of 'em. Well, we didn't let that sort of thing get very far. We brought a little mass pressure on them and the seventeen didn't go to any jail."

The seaman smiled broadly. "We did the same thing. They tried to break our union by raiding a meeting and when a guy was killed jumping out of a window they tried to hang murder on some of the rank and file. They had the trial all right, but we saw to it that the fellows were freed."

They stood side by side, puffing cigarettes. The sailor shrugged, "Not much difference one place or the other. That's what those fellows inside mean by the threat of fascism." He stopped, pointing his finger at the farmer. "By God, if they try to pull any war stuff, they'll have a helluva time getting anyone to handle their cargoes. Now, if you fellows wouldn't let 'em get the stuff you raise—" he prodded the other man with his finger.

The farmer nodded.

The delegate from a Cleveland branch of the American League was very young and very pretty. "You see," she explained to me, "I just joined the League. We're mostly young people in our branch. But I guess we are the ones who are supposed to support a war, to fight in it. That's why

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are organizing and are trying to bring the things said here back into the schools and colleges. Quite a few of the boys in our branch work in the iron foundries. You know, iron foundries can make war materials. Our boys will bring what they learn into the union—"

"And you—?"

"There's plenty to do." She hesitated, then added, "You know, my father was killed in the last war. I don't remember him. He's a hero—to all the relatives who like to brag about a martyr. But to me—it seems to me I've been cheated. Perhaps that's why I joined the League."

Grover Johnson, I.L.D. lawyer from Southern California, was one of the delegation calling on Mayor Burton of Cleveland to demand the release of young students arrested for picketing *Red Salute,* a motion picture slandering students and liberal thought. Johnson is an old hand at such action. He was beaten in Imperial Valley for defending strikers attacked by vigilantes and deprived of civil rights. He helped Leo Gallagher defend the Sacramento criminal syndicalism cases. He knows what fascism promises; he has seen terror gather momentum on the West Coast.

The delegation arrived at the courthouse at eight in the evening. The committee filed into the mayor's elaborate office: James Waterman Wise, the spokesman; Mrs. Harry Ward; Mrs. Kolar of the Community Church; Joseph Gelders of the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners; other delegates from the Congress. Mayor Burton appeared extremely uncomfortable. Previous to the committee's arrival he whispered to another delegation waiting in an outer office, "Don't know what they're after." Then half-jokingly, half-serious, "Maybe I'll have to call you in to help me out."

The committee asked Mayor Burton to release the nineteen students who protested the showing of a fascist film. After all, the mayor had opened the Third Congress. He must have meant what he said there: "We have faith in our ability to meet the issue of government through free discussion and free speech."

"You see, Mr. Mayor," James Waterman Wise began, leaning across the table, "we must report your action to the Congress. We are anxious to know your decision—"

The mayor fidgeted. This was mass pressure and he distinctly disliked the taste of it. But there was the Congress across the street, twenty-two hundred delegates, newspaper reporters—well, he decided, perhaps it could be arranged to free the out-of-town students. The committee could return to the Congress with a good report.

The delegate from Arkansas spoke with a decided drawl. He was talking to a tall, burly Negro from New York and two

Russell T. Limbach

farmers from Wisconsin about the sharecropper movement, about terror that had made the South its homeland through lynchings and beatings and oppression. "Sure tough t' beat the racket. We're pretty lonely down there, pretty much away from all the rest of you."

The Negro nodded, slowly, "I know. I come from Alabama. I know."

And the two farm delegates agreed, looking into space.

The Southerner continued. "Now down in Florida with that Shoemaker case—putting the K.K.K. on the spot—that didn't happen by accident. That's what pressure can do. We need that right now in Arkansas. And how! A convention like this can build a movement strong enough to stop terror wherever it comes." He paused. "You hear a lot about white and black fightin' side by side. I mean it. Not just words, but really. It has t' come—"

"Yes," said the Negro. "That's the way we won the strike at The Amsterdam News. Together—black and white."

Cleveland cemented the United Front. Delegates realized that what had been predicted over a year ago at the Second Congress was now a reality. Fascism has lead directly to war: Italy invades a small independent nation; Germany is arming feverishly for an attack on the Soviet Union; Japan's legions march into China and Mongolia in preparation for a sweep into Siberia. And in this country, the delegates learned of direct working-class action against war—the strike of seamen on the Norwegian boat Spero which they refused to man because it bore scrap iron destined for Italy; the strikes up and down the West Coast, in Portland, San Francisco, San Pedro, whenever a ship laden with war supplies attempted to leave port. In the trade-union commission gathered representatives of all the basic industries—coal, steel, iron and tin, electrical power, building trades, oil, automobile, rubber, longshoremen and sailors, transport and communication, union after union pledging action — *militant action* — against fascism, against war.

That is the United Front. A new mass force—the statistics of the delegations attending the Third Congress intimate the breadth of the movement:

992 organizations with a membership 1,970,560.

302 representatives of 209 trade unions with a membership of 459,168.

264 social, educational, professional and fraternal organizations with 791,390 members.

17 anti-fascist and peace organizations with 16,850 members.

18 farm groups with a membership of 57,310.

36 church and religious organizations with 16,730 members.

Representatives from Mexico, Canada, Cuba, Puerto Rico and speakers from Japan and China.

And the speakers, from political parties and trade unions, from churches and professional groups, from white-collar and farm organizations.

Rabbi Brickner, Cleveland ("Religion and war are incompatible.")

Frank Palmer, editor of People's Press ("The generation of my son knows what we did not know. Don't put machine guns in their hands.")

Earl Browder, general secretary of the Communist Party ("This Congress is a broad United Front extending as far to the Right as you can expect to find honest and courageous men.").

Max Hayes, of the Cleveland Federation of Labor ("I don't care a rap whether Communists or anybody else were the instigators of this movement . . . I'll go along with it.").

Langston Hughes, Negro poet and novelist ("In one sense, Negroes have always known fascism.")

General Butler of the U. S. Marines ("I am against war because it's a racket. I'm against fascism because it brings war.").

C. W. Fine of the Farmers' Union ("If this country shall permit the destructive forces of fascism and war, they will destroy this country.")

Dr. Harry Ward, chairman of the American League ("We demand of the present session of Congress a real neutrality—not a smoke screen behind which our profiteers in death can operate.").

The Congress did not content itself with statements against war and fascism. Aside from resolutions against terror and armaments, against the persecution of political prisoners and the growing menace of reaction, the trade-union commission introduced a resolution calling for the formation of a joint committee composed of representatives from the American League, the trade unions and the Socialist Party to spread the base of the United Front more firmly into trade unions. The American Federation of Labor at its convention in Atlantic City last autumn passed resolutions against war and fascism. But it still remains necessary to activize the Central Trade and Labor Coun-

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cils, the State Federations, the International Unions. To this end, the new committee will study ways and means of reaching this huge organized working-class reservoir that as yet has taken, except in isolated instances, no definite action against the growing menace of fascism and imminent war. The Socialist Party by its unanimous approval of the new committee and by its decision to participate in the building an even broader People's Front has taken the only logical step open to sincere Socialists.

For there is not much time remaining. The American League Against War and Fascism must expand from its present sound foundation into a People's Front able to resist every attack if the American masses are to preserve all that is worth preserving in American life.

The special train heads toward New York. And in one car a score of trade unionists block the aisle, lean over the seats. Bricklayers, carpenters, painters, electricians. Out of their talk comes an idea not heard from the platform at the Congress, but heard in every hotel lobby, in restaurants and in the auditorium, wherever delegates gather—the Farmer-Labor Party. The American League is non-political. But it is the backdrop for a political party that will take into ... ment the demands of the American Lea... the demands of all the elements at the Congress who want social security, civil liberties, political representation that actually represents the masses of America.

The painter from New York expresses it, "A Farmer-Labor Party. They've started in New Jersey, in Connecticut, in Detroit and San Francisco. We've got to have it everywhere—our party, the workers' and farmers' party."

The others eye him. And the score of men slowly nod their heads, turning it over in their minds.

The Soviets Transform the Village

JOSHUA KUNITZ

Moscow.

TO UNDERSTAND the reason for the abolition of the bread card in January, 1935, and of all food rationing nine months later, to understand the reason for the universal and constant lowering of prices on foods, especially on bread, one must bear in mind that by 1934, the U.S.S.R. once "hungry, wooden, drunken Russia," had become a land of flourishing modern agriculture, claiming first rank among the grain-producing countries. The rapid growth of Soviet agriculture was of course not unrelated to the still more rapid development of Soviet industry. The two processes were aspects of one and the same thing and the progress of one was impossible without the progress of the other. Here I will deal with Soviet agriculture, leaving the discussion of the incredible unfoldment of Soviet industry for another article.

To resume then. By 1934, the greatest, most fundamental, most sweeping revolution in the history of mankind was well-nigh completed. Over nineteen million petty, individual, primitive peasant households, sprinkled over one-sixth of the land surface of the globe and about 90 percent of all arable lands stretching from the Gulf of Finland to the Bering Straits and from the Arctic to the Transcaucasus and the Pamir, were joined in ultra-modern, mechanized and socialized collective and state farms. This, I say, was the basic Revolution—and it was accomplished and made to yield dizzying results within the brief period of five years.

In 1934, over 280 thousand tractors labored on Soviet fields. About thirty-three thousand combines, thirty-four thousand autotrucks, 845 thousand sowing machines, 129 thousand threshing machines—over two million different harvesting machines were tearing out the deepest roots of capitalism from the Soviet soil.

In 1934, the kulaks, the saboteurs, the wreckers of socialist agriculture, were, as a class, quite beaten, disarmed—"liquidated!"

In 1934, Soviet agriculture, despite the drought in various sections of the Ukraine and North Caucasus (the two most important grain regions) showed unprecedented tempi of work. The spring sowing was completed earlier than ever before—twenty days earlier than in 1933 and forty days earlier than in 1932. In the fall, the tempi were even more startling, the grain deliveries having been completed one and a half months earlier than in 1933 ... three months earlier than in 1932.

As a result, in 1934 the Soviet Government had at its disposa... one and a half billion puds of bread. Compare this with little over a half billion puds it had in 1928 and the whole picture o... the progress of Soviet agriculture and the main reason for the abolition of the bread ...ard in the fall of 1934 will be clear befo... your eyes.

The period of struggl..., reorganization and readjustment was, in th... main, at an end. The period of scarcity ...as essentially over. With the change in the process of production completed, the meth...d of food distribution had to change acco...dingly. The bread card had performed its great historic role: it now had to go. I...s further presence would become an impe...ment to continued progress.

Speaking before the S...venteenth Congress of the Communist Party ...n the fall of 1934, Stalin said:

> We have now reached th... point where the basic problems of our industry ...have been correctly solved, and our industry n...w stands firmly on its own feet. We have now r...ached the point where the basic problems of our agriculture have also been correctly solved anc... our agriculture—we can say unhesitatingly—n...w also stands firmly on its feet. But we may sc...tter these gains if our goods turnover is cripple... or if our transport drags like an iron ball at... our feet. Hence the problem of accelerating our ...oods turnover and of decisively improving our ...ansport is that very immediate and pressing problem without the solving of which we can make not one step forward.

That Stalin was not indulging in premature boasts when he said in 1934 that Soviet agriculture had solved its problems and was standing firmly on its feet can be seen from the magnificent results Soviet agriculture has been showing in 1935. *For the first time Soviet agriculture is increasing its output at a rate comparable to that of Soviet industry.* The gross output of agriculture in 1934 amounted to 14.8 billion rubles—an increase of 13.4 percent in comparison with 1932. Already agriculture had begun to approach the level indicated in the Second Five-Year Plan. This year the stride is even greater—by the end of the year the gross output will be about 17.3 billion rubles.

JUST as significant as the enormously increased quantity of agricultural output is the improved quality of the work in the villages. This year's entire grain harvest, though much bigger than that of any preceding year, was completely gathered in the last days of September and on October 10. The Soviet press announced that on that date the collective, state and individual farms had fulfilled their grain deliveries to the extent of 101.6 percent of the plan. In other words, this year Soviet agriculture has turned over to the state its greatly increased grain quota one month earlier than last year and two and a half months earlier than two years ago!

More. Besides the grain delivery plan the collective farms have also completed, and also before time, their payments in kind for the work of the machine-tractor stations and the return of seed loans.

An advance almost as startling has been made this year in the technical crops—cotton, flax, sugar-beets, etc.—all of which boast record harvests and unprecedented speed in state deliveries.

What does all this show?

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shows that Soviet agriculture, like Soviet industry, has begun to master technique, science. It shows a degree of organization, efficiency, labor discipline and willingness to cooperate with the proletarian state unimaginable in the Soviet village three or four years ago. It shows that every link in the Soviet apparatus—the village Soviets, the Party nuclei, the grain-collecting organization, the elevators, the machine-tractor stations, the training schools for truck, combine and tractor drivers, the agricultural schools, the road-building organizations, the railways, the tractor plants and all other plants producing agricultural machinery have learned how to work. Less red-tape, less talk, greater mobility, fewer unnecessary stoppages, breakages, accidents. Millions, literally millions of peasants in the villages, have learned to operate machines, have learned to appreciate and love their machines.

During my recent trips through the country I had occasion to visit some state farms in the Ukraine that I had once visited three or four years ago. I have particular reference to the eighteen state farms administered by the Rostov Meat and Dairy Trust and to the well-known grain farm "Gigant" near Rostov. The difference was striking. Speaking of the progress made by the Trust, its director, A. Antipov, exclaimed:

> But why compare with the prehistoric period of three or four years ago? Compare it with last year! Even last year our farms seemed pretty much of a losing proposition. Yes, last year we would have been in a hole if it were not for the state subsidies. This year we have refused to accept state aid. What's more we are expecting to make a profit of several millions. *A profit* . . . though we are selling our produce at prices way below our plans . . . milk at twenty-two rubles a centner instead of the expected forty-six, meat at fifty-one instead of one hundred and sixteen and so on all along the line. The reason? Our production has made a colossal jump. Of butter alone we are producing 62.3 percent more than last year.

The story of how the state farms under Antipov became profitable enterprises is a story worth recounting. Except for some details, the same story might be told of thousands of other state and collective farms. Essentially, it was the story of the mastery of technique, of efficient organization, rationalization, strict economy, discipline. Thus, among the eighteen farm directors, only three were relatively new to the work; the others were people with from three to five years experience in large-scale cattle raising and dairy farming. This detail is significant, for the same was true of 45 percent of the brigade commanders. It indicates that the Soviets are beginning to have their own cadres of experts—and cadres at this stage of Soviet development "determine everything."

Naturally, since the directors and brigade commanders are in the main experienced people, the guidance they give is specific, detailed—not that vague, "ideological," generalized guidance of former days.

To illustrate. Until this year all the cattle in each farm were herded and fed together, on an equal basis. "Egalitarianism with a vengeance," jested Antipov. On the suggestion of one of the more experienced directors, a new experiment was tried. All the best milch cows were grouped together in special herds. They were declared "udarniks" and given preferential treatment, especially more and better food. The results were excellent. The "udarniks" began to give more and richer milk. There was the "udarnik" Liubka, for instance, whose production increased by twenty liters of milk per day—from fourteen to thirty-four! And there was Moroznaia who now began to give forty-two instead of twenty-five liters daily. And so on—udarniks by the thousand. Small wonder the production of butter increased by 62.3 percent. In 1931 the average yield of butter per cow was 4.5 kilograms; in 1934 —27.3; and in 1935 at least 45 kilograms—a thousand-percent increase in comparison with 1931.

A similar tale of superior organization, improved work and greater profits was told by V. K. Rosenthal, the director of the Gigant. One of the largest grain farms in the world, the Gigant this year completed the spring sowing in seven days and the harvesting in nineteen. Here, too, the successes were attributable to minor improvements in organization. Instead of 141 tractors of different makes used in former years, the Gigant this year employed only 83 caterpillar tractors. Instead of two shifts (day and night), all the work was now done in the day shift. Instead of eighteen over-staffed tractor brigades, each employing nine or ten tractors and five or six combines, each consisting of commander, assistants, drivers, chauffeurs and too many auxiliary seasonal workers, the Gigant this year had eighty-three small "aggregates," each headed by an expert tractor driver. The result: fewer workers, better work and an economy of 600,000 rubles.

MY observations in numerous machine and tractor stations simply confirmed what I saw in the state farms. For the information of those of my readers who are not familiar with the organizational forms of socialized agriculture, I will explain in a few words the nature and function of the M.T.S.'s. A machine and tractor station is a large state enterprise, equipped with all the latest agricultural machinery, which for payment in kind renders the surrounding collective farms all the technical and scientific services they require. In accordance with the agreement made in each case, the M.T.S. provides for the sowing, harvesting, plowing or some other kind of work or all of the work required on a part or the whole of the area of a collective farm. Even when the M.T.S. does *all* of the work, the payment it receives in kind (no other form of payment is allowed) does not exceed one-fifth of the actual yield of the area it has cultivated. There are now about four thousand M.T.S.'s in the Soviet Union—about twice as many as there were in 1932 and immeasurably better equipped and organized. The plan for 1937 is six thousand M.T.S.'s whose task it will be to carry the mechanization of Soviet agriculture to completion.

The hundreds of thousands of tractors (5,661,000 h.p.!) now working the Soviet fields are run by expert drivers. The day of the novice is over. I hesitate to clutter the article with too many statistics. To the imaginative person, however, Soviet figures can be as exciting, as romantic as any adventure story or poem. How many people, for instance, know that in 1935 the average Soviet tractor performed about five times as much work as the average tractor in the United States? The 1930 figure for the United States (the only figure I have before me) was 90 hectares per tractor. The Soviet figures since 1933 are: 363 hectares, 310 hectares and 455 hectares. The plan for 1937 is 538. Needless to say, the plan will be overfulfilled. For there are already numerous drivers whose tractors cover as much as six hundred, eight hundred and even one thousand hectares per year!

It is well known that much of the speed of this year's harvesting campaign was due to the excellent work of the Soviet combines. Where are those wiseacres who snickered at the mere suggestion of the Russian muzhik running this highly-complex mechanism? The Russian muzhik and a combine—the mere juxtaposition of the two was enough to throw some bourgeois gentlemen into fits of side-splitting laughter. Their hilarity was a little premature. There are now fifty thousand combines in the Soviet Union. This year hundreds of Soviet combines covered as much as three hundred, five hundred and even nine hundred hectares each. The American average per combine in 1930 was 231 hectares. It seems then that the Bolshevik slogan "overtake and surpass" is not as ludicrous as it used to sound only a couple of years ago.

I wish space permitted to quote in full the stirring letter sent (October 2) by one hundred and sixteen southern combine drivers to Joseph Stalin. Having completed their work on the southern fields, these youngsters (most of them in their 'teens or early twenties) were despatched with their machines to gather the harvest in Siberia and the Urals. The expedition with which they carried out their assignment evoked universal admiration. Their letter to Stalin is too long to be reproduced here. A few excerpts, I hope, will convey some of the spirit:

> . . . We love our combines. We know their motors, every screw and pinion in them. We are motorists. And when our country calls us to defend its borders, we will rise to a man to its defense. In the steel ranks of the Soviet proletariat, we shall not be the last. What has been won and achieved with the blood of the best sons of our socialist fatherland, we shall yield to no one, never. . . .

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Those who are speculating on the backwardness of the Russian muzhik had better realize before it is too late that the Russian muzhik whom they had come to know in pre-revolutionary novels and histories has vanished in the limbo of the past. The central figures in the village are not muzhiks, not even peasants in the usually accepted sense — they are industrial workers, class-conscious proletarians, builders of socialism:

> . . . The vast majority of us are young. The collective and state-farm system in our villages has grown, triumphed and become permanently fixed before our very eyes. Of the past—sheriffs and policemen, Czars and Czarist prisons, landlords and serfs, manufacturers and wage slaves—we know more through hearsay, from our fathers and grandfathers. And if in the past we were poor peasants, farm laborers, working to fill the pockets and bellies of kulaks, we are now full masters of our present and our future. . . . Gathering our Soviet harvest was glorious work. But there is no special merit in what we have done—we have merely performed our duty to our Party and our country. . . . Each one of us has harvested from 400 to 600 hectares—as much as a whole estate of some rich landlord in the old days. Such large spaces covered by single combines. . . . We shall pull all our combine operators up to our level and then all together storm new and more difficult heights.

I CANNOT tell how far Robert Forsythe is right when he asserts that even in capitalist America coal miners, despite oppression and exploitation, "like coal mining" and structural workers "tossing rivets about on 60-story buildings" or "walking about so casually up there in the string-like girders . . . get a great kick out of it." If Forsythe's memory does not deceive him, if it is actually true that even in capitalist America, working a night shift of 13 and 7/12 hours at 20 cents an hour, he himself "has never had such a sense of achievement and power in my life" as while running a turret lathe in a machine shop, if that is actually true, then can you imagine "the sense of achievement and power," can you imagine the pride and the "great kick" the Soviet combine operators get out of sweeping the golden steppes of collectivized Siberia with the mammoth blades of their tamed monsters?

I repeat: the lazy, shiftless, ho, effectual, emaciated peasant, ploddi. lenly behind his lean mare and ric. wooden plow on his narrow lonely strip darkling under a leaden sky, so beloved by the Russian artists of old, can be seen now only on the walls of Soviet museums—not on the Soviet fields. The new village has nurtured an entirely new, unrecognizable breed. "Our inspiration," say the combine operators to Stalin, "has been our Party and the example provided by you, the foremost Bolshevik."

These youngsters are not isolated cases in the Soviet village. They are not freaks, biological sports. They are typical products of two five-year plans. There are millions like them. During the first *piatiletka* alone four and a half million young people were trained for just such jobs. Four and a half million tractor drivers, combine operators, mechanics, agronomists, chairmen of collective farms, managers of state farms, bookkeepers, accountants, brigade commanders. Four and a half million of them!

Starve, Peasant!

The Crisis in the Idaho Hills

GEORGE DIXON

The following article on conditions among poor farmers and agricultural workers in the Far West was written before the Supreme Court invalidated the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The A.A.A. proved to be of little help indeed to the small farmers, although some benefit accrued to the middle farmer. With the A.A.A. defeat, the poor and middle farmers are left without even the meager aid that occasionally filtered through to them.—THE EDITORS.

YOU DON'T hear much about the land west of the Dakotas, but in the great dry-farming areas of the Far West men and women are in just as bad shape as the farm population of more publicized areas. The millions of acres of wheat land extending west through Montana and south into Idaho years ago were vast producers of marketable grains. Thousands of farmers went out, cleared the sage, plowed around the lava boulders and during the wartime boom made considerable money. But the picture rapidly changed; prices on every farm product and especially on wheat fell like plummets.

The impact of a glutted market was felt by the farmers years earlier than by other American workers. On Canyon Creek in eastern Idaho for example as early as 1920 a man considered himself lucky if he got from the land as much money as he put into it. Gibbons and Reed, who in that year owned between two and three thousand acres of the best dry land experienced a complete crop failure and in the long winter that followed lost most of their range stock. The next year, with the collapse of the American wheat market, they had to get crop loans and seed mortgages, and the harvest of that year broke them. This happened to a flourishing partnership of well-to-do men; what was the lot of the little farmer with maybe half a section in wheat? He had more difficulty in getting his loans—if he could get them at all—and when he was broke he was sold off his land.

The dry-farmer who has stuck it out until today is a hard-bitten, angry man with no love for the Roosevelt government. He sees the results of A.A.A. policy and he knows that the government has no care for his welfare. He knows that the big ranchers, the livestock companies, the big owners of hundreds of thousands of acres of land, the Woods and Hagenbarths are getting A.A.A. checks, but he has not seen any come his way. And his hatred of the trustified farming interests mounts daily.

The tactics employed by the Woods Livestock Company, several years ago taken over by Hugh Hagenbarth & Sons, have taught him what to expect of these American kulaks. During the War, Woods built the town of Spencer, Idaho, importing indigent school teachers on loans against their homesteads. This homestead land, as soon as it was cleared, was easy pickings for the company; and under the terms of the loans Woods was able to take the cleared land and throw his school teachers off. The nucleus for a powerful company was formed and in the drought years of the early 'twenties Woods bought up large areas of farm and cattle land for $1 to $8 an acre. But with wheat prices at all-time lows, the company began to use this cleared land for range; the land of independent farmers that stood in the way of Woods' herds was overrun, the fences cut and right-of-way disregarded. If the independent farmer had to move his herd through Woods' land to get it to market, they closed him out, wouldn't let him pass and there was nothing for him to do but sell out to the company at the company's price. The little man was absorbed.

Legrand Smith of Rexburg can tell you what has happened to hundreds of his friends and what happened to him. In their desperate efforts to sell the products of their factories to a farming population with no purchasing power, the International Harvester Company sent an army of salesmen into the West with "attractive" propositions on their tractors—in a time when there was already an overproduction of farm goods. Farmers bought tractors because they were willing to take any chance to make a little money to pay back their mountainous debts. They signed long installment contracts, many of them doing what Legrand Smith did, auctioning off their team outfits to make the down payment. The end result of this attempt to increase production by machinery

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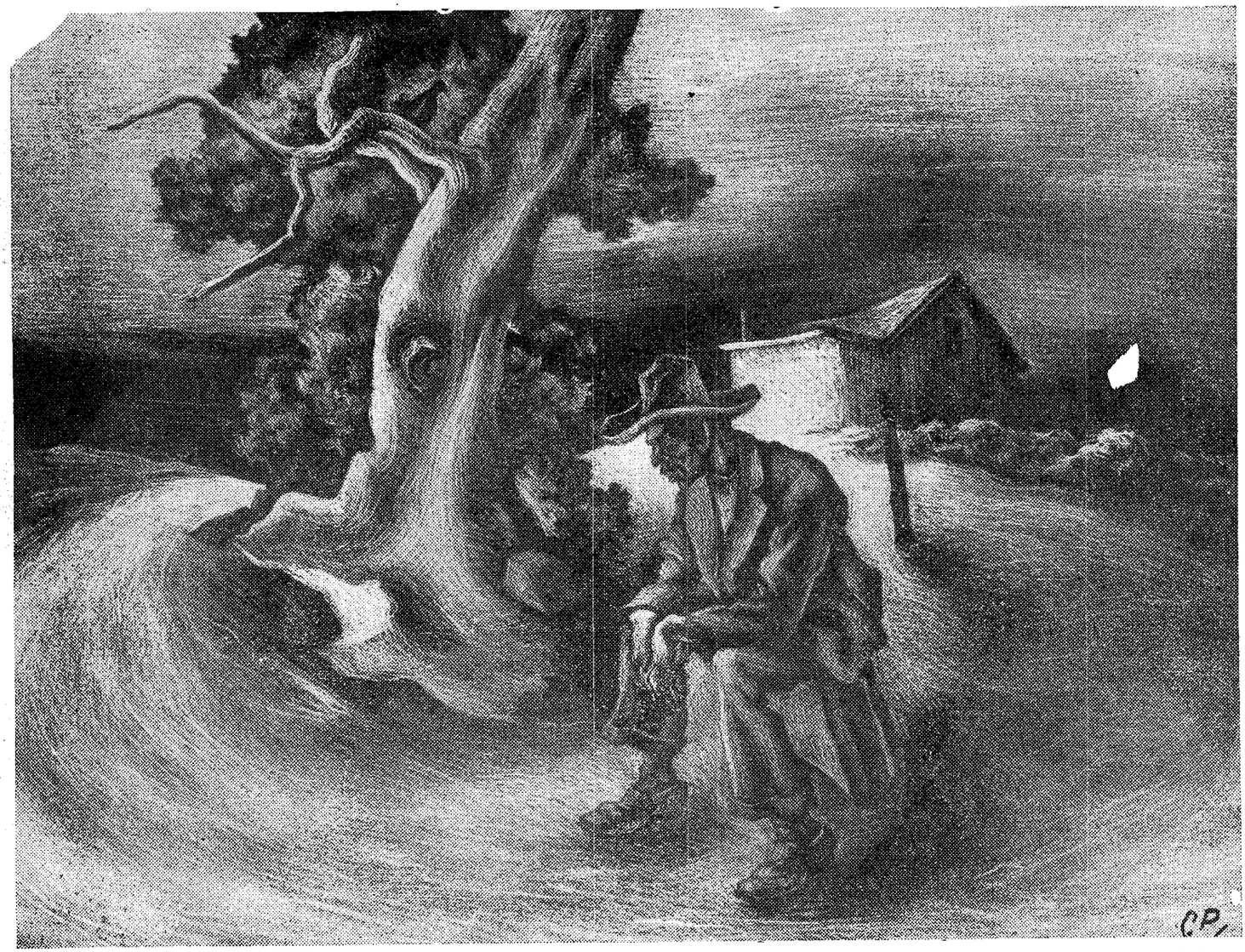

LOOK DOWN THE ROAD — *Charles Pollock*

was inevitably a further slump into debt and failure. When in the U.S.S.R. tractors and every kind of farm machinery cannot be supplied and utilized too rapidly, every attempt to use it in this country only plunges the farmer deeper into the crisis. Aside from being far too expensive for the farmer to operate, apart from the initial cost, these tractors and especially Farmalls were found to be too light and poorly constructed to work the heavy soil in the rolling lava hills of Idaho. Now they may be seen standing in sheds or on corner lots unused, rusted and abandoned—and not paid for.

IN THE last five years thousands of these small farmers have been sold out, expropriated. They have become migratory workers, moving with the seasons from wheat to peas to beets and to the lumber camps. They have joined with the thousands of transient Mexicans. And they are forced to exist at the lowest subsistence levels of any workers in the country.

The San Diego Fruit and Produce Company raises peas on a large scale in the Teton region of Idaho. Each year for several weeks in August and September thousands of Mexicans and American workers are recruited from over the intermountain states to work in the fields as pickers. A traveling agent solicits pickers, promising a wage he knows will not be paid. On arriving at the camps the workers have no choice but to accept the company's terms, having spent their last cent bringing themselves and their families perhaps hundreds of miles in the expectation of a season's work at fair wages. They sign contracts which the Mexicans in most cases do not understand. The single men are forced to board with the company, the family men to live in miserable mud-and-packing-case huts furnished by the company and to buy at the company's store.

In 1935 the wage paid was eighty-five cents per hundredweight of peas picked. An average picker can pick from two to three "hampers" in a fourteen-hour day. But the company has figured out a way to swindle the picker out of part of his wage, force him to spend all of the wages he does get and keep him in the fields until the last tailings of peas are picked, when he can't pick more than forty cents worth of small third-run peas from the bad fields. The method is simple. The men are paid seventy cents "straight" with a bonus of fifteen cents per hundredweight to be paid at the end of the contract. If a picker quits or for any reason is absent for a day from the fields he forfeits the entire bonus accumulation. If a picker does work out his contract he makes so little during the last weeks, since the peas grow scarcer—and smaller—that his earnings are eaten up by his living expenses. The company charges him $1 a day board and he's lucky to make forty cents, bonus and all, in the last weeks of work.

On August 14, 1935, 2,000 pickers went on strike in the fields of the San Diego Fruit and Produce Company, demanding $1 straight per hamper. The sheriff of Teton county hurriedly deputized several dozen growers, entered the camp and at the point of guns arrested four of the strike leaders, blackjacked them and threw them into jail at Driggs, Idaho. But the next day the strikers parried by surrounding a group of deputies in the camp, backing them into an automobile and keeping them there until Sheriff H. Rex Smith released the strike leaders.

That afternoon hysterical growers gathered in the courthouse at Driggs, screaming for armed intervention against the striking

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pea pickers. Sheriff H. Rex Smith cowered in his office, saying the situation was entirely beyond his control and S. H. Atchley, prosecuting attorney of Teton county, frantically wired Governor Ross to send troops.

When the National Guard arrived the troops marched into the camps and "captured" over 200 strikers. At the muzzle's end work resumed.

IT IS a fact that the population of this Far Western farm area has fallen by almost a quarter in the last five or six years. West from the Teton mountains to the valleys of central Idaho thousands of dry-land acres lie uncultivated, untenanted, the huddle of abandoned shacks on a hillock overlooking the vacant land falling more completely to ruin with every winter. Some of these farms were deserted ten years ago and these look now almost as if a plow had never been set in them and the land never cleared. Others were vacated only last fall, but increasingly as relief money filters more slowly through where it is not cut altogether, the land is being abandoned. Ghost towns—the sun-baked, unpainted frame post-office, dance hall and general store—stand at the junction of section roads as testimony to a dead system of agriculture. Those farmers who have stuck it out speak of the country as being all shot to hell and some even go so far as to blame the land itself for their st.

But it is becoming increasingly apparent to a growing number of these men living peasant existences on the bare stretches of the Idaho hills that hunger is the only thing they can expect of the farmer's life under the present set-up. All the confident assertions and ballyhoo of their county agents does not delude them; the slight improvement in market prices has not caught up with the soaring prices of consumer's goods. The great task is simply to reach these disillusioned and angry men and put in their hands the methods to fight for their rights, the knowledge of their historic role in the struggle for a human existence.

An Open Letter to Romain Rolland

On His Seventieth Birthday

WALDO FRANK

YOUR seventieth birthday comes at a time when France holds in her hands the immediate destiny of the Western world. The result of the struggle for power in France between the elements of reaction, typified by the Croix de Feu, which are the forces of death, and the elements of re-creation, typified by the Front Uni, which are the forces of life, may well determine the result, at least as it effects those still living, of the same struggle throughout the Occident. If France fails, Great Britain fails; the sinister forces in the United States, emboldened by a century of capitalist anarchy—may sweep America into the same disaster. If France fails, Western man may fail: and a period of overwhelming darkness may intervene for us all, before that future time when our progeny once again takes up the Torch, held aloft meanwhile who knows for how long? by the Soviet Union and perhaps by certain parts of China, India, America Hispana that prove inaccessible to fascist armies.

At this crucial scene of mankind, as so often in the past, France plays the leading role. And we, who celebrate your seventieth birthday, Romain Rolland, perforce look upon you as the symbol of our hope in your great country. You are a great man, a great *person,* Romain Rolland, because you are a symbol; because a world spirit speaks *through* you. At this hour of crisis and of celebration, for many in my country, you incarnate the genius which for eight centuries has sustained French culture.

This genius is a kind of "common sense," rare alas! both individually and collectively rare. It is "common" only as essence, as the universal, is common. It is compounded of a ruthless clarity in meeting the Real and in relating its parts together; of an invincible courage in following whither the Real leads at whatever sacrifice of individual peace and comfort; and of a creative vision in so mastering the facts that they may ever more closely conform with man's intuition of his dignity and destiny.

As I look about me at the world in which I have now lived for over forty years, meeting men of all qualities of mind and temperament and talent, I am appalled at the rarity of this "common sense"; and I am no longer amazed at the cruel and dolorous pass to which the world has come. Men of genius in the usual sense of the word are not rare; nor men of physical courage, nor men of imagination. But terribly rare is the man who, capable of knowing the truth, continues to serve the truth after that moment in which such service begins to make him suffer; terribly rare is the man of imagination who, finding that he can sell his gifts at high price unto the prostitutes and exploiters who rule the world, elects still to give his gifts into the hands of his humble brothers; terribly rare is the man who, possessing courage, does not get drunk with it and lose his control of reality, finding it easier to move armies or mobs than to master his own ego.

Men of this rare "common sense" will, perhaps, some day be more common; this, then, will be a different world. But until that time of maturity arrives, these men are historic. You are one of them, Romain Rolland. In you, there is no break between conviction and action; between recognition of the truth and every word and deed within your power to fulfill it; between the responsibility you feel for your dignity as an heir of Man and the responsibility you feel for your dignity as a servant of men. Ten years ago, I called you a *whole man,* Romain Rolland. I cannot improve this term, today. The whole man is he who possesses this "common sense" I speak of.

I pray that France may duly celebrate the seventieth birthday of her great son and heir to those intellectual and ethical qualities which have made France great. If she does so, it will have to be by her actions. France knows where the truth lies: will she have the common sense to serve it? She knows that truth lies first of all in fearless realization of the collective economic freedom which can alone make *true* those principles of *Egalité, Fraternité, Liberté,* which now for a hundred years she has flaunted on all her public buildings. To this end, the people of France must grimly sever from their loyalty to *La Patrie* those greeds and inertias and self-indulgences of class which are the germs of fascism and of death. The hour has come when France must accomplish the promise of her great tradition to herself and to the world. She must mature into realization. It will hurt, it will be heroic. But if France fails now, she goes down; she commits that suicide of the spirit which ever precedes the decomposition of the body.

Great nations mirror their powers and their vision in the lives of their great men. Let France, today, look to herself by looking to you, Romain Rolland. Let her study the clear, pure progress of your ideas from their humanitarian idealism of your bourgeois youth, through the trial of War which schooled you to find the truth in *facts,* and to the strong revolutionary realism which is your deed, today. What France sees, in studying you, let her understand to be the symbol of her own ineluctable course, if she would continue to be France.

. . . This prayer to France, this challenge to France, this confidence, is my way, Romain Rolland, of celebrating your seventieth birthday.

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The European Spirit

ROMAIN ROLLAND

The Nouvelles Littéraires, a Paris literary weekly, is asking various writers to give their conception of the "European spirit." The following questions are the basis for each writer's article.

Does there exist a European spirit? Is that spirit more than an entity, i.e., is it a living reality?

Has the intellectual a role to play in the formation of this human spirit and should he therefore forsake his traditional position as an intellectual?

Will the European be the new man whom we see springing up in various points on the continent? Will Europe be made by intellectuals or will it be born of certain economic necessities?

The following is Romain Rolland's answer to the questionnaire.

I HAVE read your questionnaire. Allow me to say that I have answered it in advance in my recent volume, *Quinze Ans de Combat* . . . Your questions deal with a Europe that is isolated or distinguished from the rest of the world. I must state flatly that I do not follow you along that road; I can envisage no spirit that would restrict itself to Europe. I do not say that Europeanism may not be the next stage in human evolution and that it does not mark a step more advanced than nationalism. But many of us have passed that stage and we shall not turn back. We see too clearly that Europeanism at the present time in its diverse garbs is the mask of a new nationalism much more dangerous because it groups together greater forces and more voracious interests, and because this Europeanism proclaims itself as such, it provokes instantaneously the formation of two or three rival groups.

Everything is in motion, the whole world is in the melting pot. Let us not make worlds of super-nations, in which the cast-iron grows cold and breaks into new and separate blocks. There must be no International except the universal International.

Ten years after the war, in which he had abdicated like his fellows, Julien Benda took it upon himself to bring to trial intellectuals who had "betrayed."[1] For himself he set up as an idol an intellect, whose independence is without dangers, since it refuses to enter the domain of the real where it might run the risk of getting caught between the fires of the combatants. That spirit reigns over the frozen world of abstract ideas, ideas without application in practical life. That spirit does not disturb the present masters, and they even like to encourage it, for the games of the esthetes and the sophists of non-applied intelligence, turn the eyes of idle onlookers away from the arena, in which the destinies of peoples are being settled. I shall never be able to say often enough the aversion I feel for that idolatry of the mind *in abstracto*. . . . Whether that idolatry be conscious or not, it is part and parcel of the *Combinazioni* of the present-day masters of politics and they encourage it. I am more than anyone else the champion of that independence of the mind which permits one to dominate the battlefield, but I do not admit that seeing exempts one from acting. When one sees well, one acts better. One *must* act.

The servants of the intellect have no right to hold themselves aloof from social and political movements. They form a team in the confederation of human labor, a special weapon, which Stalin has called in a lapidary formula the *engineers of souls*. They have no reason to attribute to their special weapon a superiority, which it has not, over the weapons of their proletarian companions, without whom they would be nothing. The aim of action of both must be the same: namely, to establish a humanity more just, more free and better ordered.

Let not the intellectual be disinterested in this action. It would ill become him to pretend unconcern, for, no more than the humblest of his brothers, has he the right to disdain the material realities which are the support and prime condition of the mind. If as an individual he pleases to buy his intellectual independence with an ascetic renunciation, he has no right to demand this renunciation of the great mass of his brothers, who cannot find in their minds the same recourse against the harshness of existence. Above all, we must lessen their misery.

My experience of the last twenty years has taught me that there is no graver error than to oppose, as we do ordinarily, a would-be *realism* of action to a derisory *idealism* of thought. In truth, the real interest of a nation is always in accord with the real sense of justice and of the permanent values of the spirit. It is not as an intellectual idealist that I combat warlike chauvinism. It is as a realist, who sees in nationalism and militarism the worst enemies of their own people, those who shrink its intelligence, those who bleed it dry, for the sole preparation of war and who by preparing for it provoke it, for they force other peoples to prepare for it. If it were true that intellectuals were, as they have a propensity to say, the brain in reference to the rest of the body, it would be appropriate to remind them of the apologue of Menenius Agrippa: What can the brains do without the members?

These times are grim, cruel, laden with havoc, but they are potent and fruitful. They destroy, renew. Let us leave aside today strictly European preoccupations. We have to struggle with ancient ideals, the dying and murderous gods and with the millions of minds without eyes which serve them blindly. We have to be found new gods and a new humanity. We can do it only at the cost of the most intense energy and a complete self-sacrifice.

It is clear that, for me, there is no reason to think that the *new man* will be by preference European. I have seen in India and in China superior types of the *new man*. He may quite as well appear among any of the races that are liberated and that have reached a certain degree of culture (and why should not they all reach it?). When we speak of the new humanity which is being built in the Soviet Union, we do not for an instant think of calling it European. It is no more so, or it is just as much so as Asiatic—or even African (why not?). In a beautiful poem by the young writer Kornilof—*My Africa*—we see a Negro fight and die, at the head of battalions of the Red Army, for *"our Russia,"* for "our Soviet fatherland" . . . And the characteristic of the new man lies precisely in this total elimination of the degrading prejudice of great human races. To the stupid racism of the low-browed non-commissioned officer Hitler, the new man opposes his universal humanism, without distinction of races, without distinction of classes—the *Weltarbeiter—the worker of the world.*

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[1] In his book *La Trahison des Clercs*. The following week Benda in his answer to the same questionnaire wrote: "I do not know where Mr. Romain Rolland conceived the idea that I had 'abdicated during the war,' whereas for four years I never stopped proclaiming publicly that the cause of France was the cause of right attacked by force, prompted by exactly the same impulse which leads me today to speak for the cause of Ethiopia. To finish with Mr. Romain Rolland, I am convinced that if he had been a citizen of Guatemala, he would have loudly insisted that France's cause was just, at least compared with that of the aggressor; that, if he did not do so, if, out of arrant unfairness, he considered them equally guilty, it was for fear of passing for a nationalist and of saying the same thing as Barrès and Maurras. As an intellectual and placing the freedom of the intellect above everything, I have the profoundest scorn for that lack of courage."

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The Marble Strike in Vermont

SARAH CLEGHORN

ARLINGTON, VT.

INSTEAD of this article, THE NEW MASSES ought to have one written from long, personal, intimate quarry-town experience, by a next-door neighbor, old friend or relative of quarry workers, to whom all that I know at arm's length of thirty miles and much that I don't know, would have been lifelong neighborhood knowledge.

So much for apologies. But at least I am an old Vermonter; I've lived where Rutland is the local metropolis for over half a century; and the quarrymen, both those with New England names and those with Hungarian and Polish names—from their grandfathers—are the same kind of folks with the same kind of environment in a thousand ways that we have in Dorset and Manchester and Arlington and all the other towns that crowd the Rutland fair in September.

The Vermont Marble Company is fifty-five years old and this is its second strike. But strikes are as rare in Vermont anyway as—well, as rich people in winter. These two rarities are related, no doubt, as cause and effect. However, a whole web of other effects and causes hangs from this local unfamiliarity with strikes. All the language of strike experience, pickets, scabs, strike-breakers, injunctions, deputy sheriffs, is foreign to the man in the Vermont village street.

But just as Vermont people can be hungry and cold, though we have no such famines as China and India, so though Pearl Bergoff never made a dollar of his hundred thousand a year breaking strikes in Vermont, yet we do have here in a sober and quiet form our share of the long, hard struggle, earth-wide and bone-deep, of the workers to organize and become responsible partners instead of obedient children in modern industry; and likewise we have here the steady, if almost subconscious, effort of the owners to show them that (as the owners doubtless sincerely believe) the unions are not half so good for them as the personal goodwill of the unchallenged overlord would be.

The Vermont Marble Company, as Vermonters have always heard, is the controlling power in the marble industry in the United States. Beside its Vermont quarries, it owns several in the South. A building in fact is to be reared in Rutland, Vermont, with a front of marble the Vermont Company has quarried in Tennessee.

The company was founded by "Old Senator Proctor," a typical captain of industry of his times, untroubled by "sentimentality," "out to win." If in his lifetime he heard the remark, "The Proctors own Vermont," I don't suppose he felt any moral embarrassment. His children are of a different type. Perhaps Miss Emily Proctor and her brothers Redfield and Mortimer own Vermont, but I don't believe they like to think so. Their sincere and practical concern for "the relief and benefit of man's estate" has been steadily shown for many years, not so much by word, for they are no speechmakers, but by deeds of serviceable goodwill from the founding and maintenance of the Vermont Sanatorium and Preventorium for tuberculosis and the Bryant Camp for delicate children on Redfield Proctor's own farm, to a multitude of neighborly assistances to hundreds of workers in their quarries, especially as they grew old. Instead of having yachts and manor houses, they have sent workers' children to college and impersonally raised the standards of Vermont's public schools.

But still, just as much as the opposite type, the predatory type, of owners, they have earnestly, all these years, kept the unions out. Painlessly perhaps; very unlike the menacing way that U. S. Steel has kept them out; still the result ran true to form. Vermont has had its branch of the A.F. of L. ever since 1909, and there are a hundred local unions in the state, and yet this leading industry has only been organized a year and a half.

And if we Vermonters had been more interested in labor history, that part of history of which educated people know least, we might have been troubled to find these workers, while so "independent" in the Vermont sense, (that of making the ends meet, no matter how shrunken the income and "asking no odds of anybody") yet by no means independent in the general sense of out-spoken freedom and variety of opinion or initiative of any sort as a group. The workers were encouraged to remain the feudal type of worker, in a safe and contented state of tutelage, perpetual minors in the industrial world.

WELL, thus it seems to have been in the green tree; what in the dry? Marble is a dwindling industry. The company knows it, the workers partly know it and even we outsiders begin to realize it now. The six years of depression have only pushed faster downstream the boat which was already floating down with the current. These new artificial stones seem really to be better than marble, though no Vermonter can acknowledge it without a pang. These new stones are cheaper; they can be moulded to the desired shape and size instead of having to be laboriously cut; they don't blacken, they don't crumble, in the open air. The last big order the Vermont Marble Company had was in 1932 or 1933, for the Supreme Court. In the two years or so that it took to fill that order they sent, Vermonters proudly say, a thousand carloads of marble to Washington. Then the brisk activity subsided and semi-stagnation came on; the company, trying to keep its payrolls open, used for wages a fund which had been laid aside for improvements; they tried having small ornaments carved out of marble, for which there proved to be little or no sale; they quarried stocks of marble for which no orders came; and then they tried that mournful expedient of "spreading the work," with its gradual emaciation of wages, which reminds one of the old British workers' practice of "clemming" or squeezing in the belt; devices to make what was too little to begin with stretch out ever further and further around, squeezing down the human needs accordingly.

"What principally caused the strike?" I asked a strike leader a few days ago. In one word he answered "Wages."

What were wages just before the strike, for the lowest-paid men in the company? I wrote and asked the chairman of the company's Board. "The minimum monthly rate for common labor in the late marble code, which we continue to observe," he replied, "was 37½ cents per hour in the Northern states and 30 cents per hour in the Southern states. At Danby the minimum hourly rate for common labor, except for one man, was 38 cents an hour, equal to $13.30 for a 35-hour week. . . ."

This is what strikers had always told me; but recently a letter appeared in The Rutland Herald in answer to an inquiry I'd made in The Herald on the same point.

> As an individual and having about thirty years' experience as an employe of the Vermont Marble Company I might be able to throw some light onto that question. During the years . . . when the Company received that huge order for the Supreme Court building in Washington, and soon after when they cut the wages twenty per-cent, I was operating a polishing machine here in the Company's shop. I was required to work three and five days a week, and my weekly earnings were from four to seven dollars.

I don't know how a polisher's pay could have been so low as this, even after a twenty-percent cut. It was certainly lower by a good deal than the Danby scale against which the men walked out. Or could it have been after deductions for rent and hospital expenses had been taken out?

"I have no accurate records" he goes on, "of my yearly earnings. That, of course, is

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in my accounts in the books of the Company of that period. Anyway it must have been three or four hundred dollars a year. . . ." And he adds, in regard to the union:

> In the early part of 1934 the Blue Eagle flew into Proctor with the message that the workingmen also must be represented in collective bargaining, and the Company gave us a fair chance by the ballot to show in what organization we wanted to be represented. It was overwhelmingly voted through the quarries and mills that we wanted to be represented by the International Union. As soon as the result of this ballot was out, the Company began to form a company union. It caused quite a confusion among the workers. The International locals that were here already also began functioning more active and getting more members. I was asked by a fellow worker to join the union and I did and became a member of Local 94. Soon after the company began to lay off the men, paying no attention to their importance or their family affairs. That caused considerable ill-feeling among the men. I also was notified that I was laid off indefinitely. Some time after that the negotiations between the union and the company began and were conducted until the strike. . . .

This account agrees substantially with all I've heard before.

In September 1934 a conference was held between company and union, which was evidently inconclusive, for another was called for October; but then the union broke off and appealed to the Regional Labor Board in Boston, complaining of these discharges and of the company union. I don't know what caused this breaking off; but it was in that month of October 1934 that the Danby men, the same who started the present strike, were dismayed to find themselves staggered to two-weeks' work a month, or a monthly wage of twenty-seven dollars. However, as strikers in telling me about this hastened to add, enough irregular and extra work occurred to bring the working time up to between two and three weeks, resulting in a little over thirty dollars a month. With deductions, etc., about twenty-five.

Now in Vermont, to be sure, less than a dollar a day for a family of five or seven to live on except for rent isn't the same grisly joke it would be in most places. This is a frugal, resourceful state, with a good deal of wild wealth in the lap of nature. By gardens in summer and by canning your own vegetables for winter, by keeping chickens, by buying your wood "on the stump" and getting it in yourself, by taking in washings, making Christmas wreaths, helping neighbors in emergencies, you can add a few dollars' worth to the store; by having had a good start ahead in furniture (and stoves) when you got married, by habitually conserving the pennies as naturally as you breathe; and by the prime Vermont habit of "using what you've got," much can be done to eke out a dollar a day and bring it a good deal nearer to a living wage than anybody who lives in a city can imagine.

—Provided no illness, no accident, no emergency, no new baby, no destitute relations taking shelter with you, no legal expenses, no necessary journeys, no special food for delicate children, no prolonged convalescence, no funerals and no weddings occur; no breakdown of household necessaries, little need for shoes, rubbers or underwear and none for dentist or eyeglasses; and provided everybody in the house is thrifty and cooperative, and that you have that priceless and in Vermont frequent thing—good neighbors.

But what family ever spent a winter in such a fairytale streak of luck?

After the couple of months they spent on this pay last fall and early winter, the Danby families dreaded to see that notice posted up again.

ONE of the Danby men who walked out this last October had had appendicitis a few years ago. He'd been taken to the excellent Proctor hospital and operated upon. "I was in the hospital thirteen days," he said, "and not equal to work for eight or ten weeks afterward. When I was working again, I got a bill of forty-two dollars from the hospital. (And a much bigger one from the doctor.) 'What you going to do about this hospital bill?' the foreman says. 'Well,' I says, 'I declare I don't know.' He began taking five dollars a week out of my pay envelope for it."

Pay that leaves no margins for this sort of thing is unrealistic pay, no matter how possible it looks on paper (for other people) to live on it or come somewhere near living on it.

Late in July 1935 negotiations began again between the company and union. The company instanced the falling off in its business and stated that the only way to pay a proper wage would be by wholesale dismissals from its rolls. As to opening the books and showing chapter and verse how, why this was so—No. Arbitration—No.

Conferences went on and the next one was to be on October 21, when on the 16th the notice was posted up again in Danby that the men would be staggered and each (a few were excepted) laid off for the fourth week in the month. This made the pay (still $13.30 a week) $40 a month.

Out of the pay envelopes the rent would be taken, as usual, for the company houses in which most of the sixty-seven quarry workers in Danby live. These houses are small—one of them in which seven persons live consists of three rooms—and the rent is correspondingly small—four and a half dollars a month up. Of this half, I believe, had been rebated during the four midwinter months last winter. Also out of the envelope were taken the small weekly charges for light, water, pension and insurance. They might have been expected to contain, when they reached the worker's hands, something between thirty and thirty-five dollars, provided there were no such charges upon them as the hospital bills I've mentioned.

Remembering the previous year's two-months' experience, even though this year the prospects were a few dollars a month to the good, the men walked out; inside of an hour, and without waiting for a strike to be called by the union. The union upheld them and on November 4 declared a strike.

These five quarry towns are by no means all of a kind. Florence and Proctor, the northernmost, are trim, comfortable, well-to-do looking places; Proctor, in particular, is praised by everybody. West and Center Rutland are much less attractive. Poverty is visible there; and when the Rev. Mr. Harris, from Hanover, New Hampshire, visited the strike regions, he said "I don't need to see Danby after seeing West and Center Rutland; I've seen enough!" In Danby, the southernmost of the five, the workers' surroundings are poorer still.

And as the five towns are, so are the proportions in which the strike affects them. In Florence, I believe, no men at all are out; in Proctor but a handful; practically all the strikers are in the three other towns. In Danby, the poorest of all, the strike began.

There were, I was told, altogether eighty-six of those deputy sheriffs whose presence in a strike the reader of labor news has long since learned to dread. To my Vermont notions the number seemed extraordinarily large; and the money they cost the company is, I know, a source of bitterness to the strikers, who ask why, if the company can afford such an expense to protect its property, it cannot afford better pay to protect flesh and blood from poverty?

The news about the bloody fight on Tuesday the ninth has only partly come in. The Rutland Herald printed next day an account by the union as well as an account by the company; each attributed the beginning of the battle to the other side. It seems clear that marble had been loaded in the presence of a considerable number of pickets and that three automobiles, two of them full of deputy sheriffs, the third (and leading) one carrying two officers of the company, were returning when the fight began.

Meantime, the Department of Labor is considering the findings of Commissioner of Conciliation Charles J. Post, who was sent to study the strike a month or more ago.

WHILE these leisurely courses are being taken by groups of persons none of whom are in need of underwear or regard a square meal as an important event, how are the strikers living? how meeting the vicissitudes of average experience and the downward excursions of the thermometer?

When I was talking to two of them last week, I asked about this in some detail.

"Does the union really do much for you in the way of supplies?"

"Why yes—quite a lot. We get flour and we get milk—evaporated milk—and some other things. We have a right to the necessaries of life—that's the law—from the towns, without a man's being forced to take any job that's offered to him."

"The towns have help about that from the Federal Government, don't they? Didn't

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I see in The Rutland Herald that the government is supplying meat to the strikers? Beef, milk and prunes to a hundred and twenty-five families in need in West Rutland, it said—including strikers. Did Danby get some too?"

"Yes, we've got some of that. The government's been sending that into the state for some time. Strikers' families didn't get it, though, till now. The union sent a telegram to Hopkins that strikers was being discriminated against; and then we got some."

"Why did the Danby strikers authorize a statement in The Herald saying they needed no help, the union was providing for them?"

"Oh, that statement—yes, that was a mistake. The children did need shoes and underwear—gosh, we need underwear!—so bad they couldn't go to school.

"I thought Vermont towns had to furnish what children of school age needed?"

"Well, yes, there's such a law, but they told us to get the union to clothe the children. Then we had a parade and showed 'em. The women paraded; and then the town of Danby furnished every child of school age that needed it with one union suit, shoes and rubbers; children under school age didn't get a union suit nor nothing."

The Socialists, I knew, had sent some little help to the strikers; and now I asked about the Communists, who, I was sure, had sent a good deal more. I knew that the Communists had been a bone of contention and that some strike leaders had tried energetically to discourage them. "Did the Communists furnish you cash and clothing too and help you in all kinds of ways?

"Yes, we got some good help from Mr. Wilgus and them. Sure we did! You probably heard about the college boys in Hanover too? They sent us a lot of clothing and so forth—collected it at the minister's house there—Reverend Harris."

"What if you—you two, for instance—tried to see somebody high up in the company and laid things clearly and honestly before him?"

"Well, tell you how it is when the union delegates or any of us try to see the chairman or anybody—as soon as one of the men gets down to brass tacks, the chairman turns to another one and asks him a question. Then when *he* gets to telling anything important, he turns to another one still and asks *him* something. We can't talk to a man like that—he knows too many big words."

Correspondence

More About the Student Front

To The New Masses:

It was with great pleasure that I saw *The American Students Unite,* an article by Celeste Strack on the cover of this week's New Masses.

I was a delegate at the American Student Union Convention and I don't think Miss Strack's report at all adequate. She confines her article to little more than the discussion on the Resolution concerned with the Oxford Pledge.

Surely Miss Strack should have made some mention of the fact that one of the major planks in the A.S.U. platform is against Negro discrimination; that several resolutions were passed, such as the one opposed to the Olympics being held in Germany; that an encouraging telegram was received from Tom Mooney.

It would be very sad, indeed, were every delegate to spend half the time in giving his report, speaking about and ridiculing a certain point that almost called a halt to the formation of the A.S.U.—a point that in reality was only a struggle between the Young Communist League and the Young People's Socialist League.

If there is some space available in one of the forthcoming issues of The New Masses, I'd suggest you print the platform of the A.S.U. as adopted. (You can secure a copy at the Union Headquarters, 112 East 19th St., N. Y. C.) Certainly nothing could be clearer than that.

Brooklyn, N. Y. Joseph Bucholtz.

A Contest for Playwrights

To The New Masses:

With Albert Bein, Clifford Odets, Group Theater playwright, Virgil Geddes, playwright and head of the Federal Experimental Drama Project and other outstanding people of the theater acting as judges, a new play contest has been launched. There is a total of $75 in prizes offered for the best plays submitted dealing with the condition of the white-collar, professional and other workers under the relief system. The contest is sponsored by the New Theater League and the City Projects Council.

The sponsors are launching this contest because they feel that the relief set-up, affecting the lives of many millions in America, offers rich material for the dramatist. What has been its effect on the traditional family relationship? What happens to the doctor, the teacher or any one of the millions of white-collar employes uprooted from his position in society by economic forces and placed side by side with other working people on a relief project?

Many an investigator sitting in a home-relief bureau or visiting a needy client, and many an impoverished client waiting for an investigator to call, has keenly felt the pulsing drama of the situation. It is hoped that this contest will encourage these people along with other professional and amateur playwrights to treat this subject.

All information about the contest, which closes March 15, may be obtained from the New Theater League. P. O. Box 300, Grand Central Annex, N. Y. C.

New Theater League.

Fascist High-School Propaganda

To The New Masses:

"The Peace Club members are all a bunch of Jewish Communists. . . . You'll see, I'm going to make trouble for you. . . . A race war in Lincoln between Italian and Jewish students will take place."

Such were the words which Mrs. Loizze, an Italian teacher at Abraham Lincoln High School in Brooklyn, hysterically shouted during a recent meeting of the school's Peace Club. Disputes had arisen between those who opposed and those who defended Mussolini's war. The students who sided with Mussolini were chosen by Miss Della Chiesa to spread fascist propaganda.

Miss Chiesa teaches Spanish at the high school and shortly after she was appointed she organized an Italian Club whose supposed purpose it is to create interest in Italian culture. Strangely enough non-Italians are barred from membership in the club.

Teachers in the history department, when discussing fascism, have noticed that the Italian students in close contact with Miss Chiesa, were unanimous in their defense of Mussolini and fascism and some have quoted her opinions on the Italo-Ethiopian war. Miss Chiesa has also organized an espionage system to discover who among the school's faculty were anti-fascist. In response to her complaints several teachers have been called to the principal's office to answer "charges of Communism" and supposed "attacks on religion."

Following the Peace Club incident there was an outbreak of clashes between the Jewish and Italian students and rumors were circulated that Communists planned to murder the principal.

It is not hard to guess where these hatreds and lies were hatched.

Brooklyn, N. Y. Harriet Wright.

Letters in Brief

There will be an affair marking the publication of Edwin Rolfe's book of poems *To My Contemporaries,* Friday, January 17, at 9 p. m., at the studio of Sophia Delza, 7 West 16th Street, New York. Subscription price: $1, for which each guest will receive a copy of the book. The affair is sponsored by a number of leading writers including James T. Farrell, Malcolm Cowley, Joseph Freeman, Michael Gold, Archibald MacLeish, Horace Gregory, etc.

The Pharmacists Union of Greater New York has been able by means of continuous pressure to compel authorities of the W.P.A. to reclassify the status of pharmacists from that of skilled workers to that of professionals. The reclassification has resulted in an increase of wages to $103.50 per month.

To round out a year of active organizational work both among the employed and unemployed pharmacists, the Union is holding its third convention at Pythian Temple, 135 West 70 Street, New York City, on January 16, Mary Van Kleeck, Norman Thomas and Heywood Broun are scheduled to address the opening meeting.

The Artists Union writes that Martin Craig, an active member, was brutally beaten by National Guardsmen of the 244th Post Artillery Guard. The attack was unprovoked and is similar to other assaults made on members of other organizations in the vicinity of Union Square. The Union asks that protests be sent to the Artillery Guard on 14th Street, and to Mayor LaGuardia demanding an investigation of the activities of this armory.

Alfred Miller, well known as an anti-Nazi and the editor of the Producer's News, a Montana farm weekly, was arrested by Immigration officers after his paper had conducted a campaign for increased relief for the farmers. He has been ordered to surrender at Ellis Island for deportation to Germany where it is certain that he will be imprisoned, if not executed.

A committee to help the Vermont Marble Strikers asks all Vermonters and others interested in aiding the strike to get in touch with Percy Shostac, 218 East 12th Street, New York City. The committee meets there every Monday at 9 P. M.

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REVIEW AND COMMENT

More than Style

FLOWERING JUDAS, by Katherine Anne Porter. Harcourt, Brace. $2.50.

IT has become the accepted thing to say of the stories of Katherine Anne Porter that they are "perfect." Unfortunately, the lush praise of her admirers has almost buried her work in too facile acceptance. Her unquestionably fine style has seldom been analyzed. Glassy-eyed fixation on style may well stop work in its course. I should like to rescue Miss Porter's very excellent stories from a too choice circle of admirers. Since the first limited edition of *Flowering Judas* in 1930 and the more recent de luxe edition in Paris of *Hacienda* one of the longer stories in the volume, Miss Porter has tended to become the too exclusive property of style worshipers. It is a fate that she does not deserve. No writer is completely unsusceptible and an audience of style worshipers may eventually corrupt like sweet syrup upon good, self-respecting meat. As a matter of fact, modern writers whose work has been identified with "style" have not had too bright a fate. Thornton Wilder, Kay Boyle and the late Katherine Mansfield come to my mind. Thornton Wilder never deserved the word in the first place. Kay Boyle perfected a style to the exclusion of almost every other ingredient necessary to serious writing. Katherine Mansfield, on her death bed, repudiated her own work and saw very clearly the necessity to relate it anew to the more basic materials of life. I don't mean to imply that her intentions were necessarily concerned with social interpretations; they most surely stated that "little tragedies" no longer absorbed her. Katherine Anne Porter's work has never become a brittle posture. It has arisen from organic sources, out of solid materials and it is because she most surely needs to be considered a going concern and not a museum piece that it is necessary to look with a sharp rather than a too moist eye. "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," "He" and "Flowering Judas" seem to me the outstanding stories in this volume for the very reason that the content more surely propels and dominates than in any of the other pieces. Style the Granny Weatherall story most assuredly has, but it is of an old woman dying, whose separate and individual death has somehow gathered into itself in its last white light an entire lifetime of courageous living, that we think at the close. I have read the story many times with undiminished admiration, and its power to evoke more than is at first comprehended, is always apparent. The same thing is true of "He," the story of a subnormal child born of poor-white, self-respecting, struggling parents. First published in the NEW MASSES years ago, it seemed to me then and does now, to reveal more of the pitiful poor who have no light to guide them except a wish to keep alive and hold up their heads a little, than any other short story I know of. The last of the poor mother's real horror at the tears on her idiot boy's cheeks as he is being driven off to a "home" are not easily forgotten and I for one, am not thinking of style at its close. "Flowering Judas" is a unique story. Laura with her naive puritanical inhibitions and her large breasts and innocence cannot understand the role she plays among the revolutionists in Mexico whom she serves with little errands instead of the love they desire. It is really nobly written, with the fine ending that is like a tortured yet extremely disciplined Blake drawing. No one can quarrel with stories such as these.

"Rope," "Magic," "Theft" leave more to be desired. More tightly drawn, interior in method, they seem frail in comparison with the more robust work. I never did believe in "Maria Concepcion." The first to be written in point of time, it has been preferred by many reviewers. It seems to me more an indictment of the taste of the time to prefer the picturesque, the easy to understand, than a criticism of the story. The characters are Mexican Indians and their drama seems curiously removed from this world. It is therefore the more readily accepted by the facile reviewer who rarely challenges the past or the remote in point of space. I do not find these Indians convincing but they are presented with such perfect muscles and gestures and the ingredients that belong to the world of the living, if not to the actual characters, that I admit it is one of the easiest stories to swallow. Here it is also more comprehensible that style may become something in itself, an isolated business, not so integrated as in the three stories already mentioned.

"Hacienda," "That Tree" and "The Cracked Looking Glass" are three of the latest stories. No one can quarrel with the last: it so perfectly succeeds in what it set out to be. The clear and lucid language of the simple country characters has become part of the style of this story, as it should be, the very construction of the sentences mirroring the thought of the characters, yet no edges left raw or broken. "That Tree" is the least important of the three and more brightly objective. "Hacienda" is more interesting from the point of development and as a hint of the future of Miss Porter's writing.

Its material is presentday Mexico, the country of the lost "real true revolution." The material has in it all the magnificence of a Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* but without the organity or final convincing pang that characterizes so much of Chekhov's work. Chekhov had a definite point of view; he saw certain definite events related to other events and explanatory of them. The word "propagandist" had not gotten into such disrepute in his day; he did not consciously steer clear of the rocks of "Art" and "Propaganda" but headed for the open sea. His course was clear and his method the more outspoken for its day. One feels Miss Porter is too wary of the rocks. As a result her course is not quite clear; it wobbles. The story finally lacks impact and becomes a jumble of dark picturesque Indians rolling pulque barrels, shooting their sisters and taking too-intimate male companions. Little stories dominate rather than become controlled by a main drive that should weld them into an indestructible impression. And as the final story of the volume, one begins

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to ask, "whose Mexico is this?" and how important is its reflection in point of time and art. The opening pages on the train, with the excellent, fussy, too American Kennerly, lose their brightness in a muddy, too colorful Mexico. The real event seems going on elsewhere as at an opera where shooting embroils the management backstage and the payroll disappears while the audience watches a slim boy out front twang a guitar. The resistant Indians who have somehow stood their ground some five hundred years refusing to be obliterated in the northern fashion, do not seem adequately represented nor is their existence given more than a hint. Yet not so long ago, they were not only "servants" but flamed over Mexico, burning haciendas and haciendadas; certainly it is not finished with them. No hint of this texture in their makeup comes in "Hacienda." I am not asking for an orthodox "way out"; far from it. I am asking for a realism that presents more of the vitality of the time and scene. That has been demanded in every era. The vital factors of one age differ from those of another but the writer who smells them out most surely is the more basic and memorable. Style is not only desirable; it is inevitable with all distinguished work. It can never become an end and be important even as style. I find in "Hacienda" a quality that is a little slippery. This should be Miss Porter's warning. She is too fine a writer, has at her hand materials too profound, to slide on silver skates to any destination.

JOSEPHINE HERBST.

Salvation by Delirium

THE LAST CIVILIAN, by Ernst Glaeser. Robert McBride and Co. $2.50.

ERNST GLAESER'S *The Last Civilian* is the first anti-Nazi novel that presents the full psychological basis for the delirious Hitlerite following that voted Nazism into power. It does this in a sensitively executed prose that patiently interweaves the collective fabric of a pre-Hitlerite German scene with sharply differentiated individual characters. Glaeser's novel is an artistic as well as a political contribution. Much has been written around the economic factors. But the specific emotive elements that entered into Hitler's mass-following have usually been dismayed through easy satire or decried as sadistic barbarism. But neither Thyssen's backing of Hitler nor Goering's perversions suffice to explain the positive note, the almost unreserved enthusiasm with which the middle class and part of the working class hailed Hitlerism. Glaeser's novel shows that a greater part of the Nazi supporters were actuated by an idealistic fervor, directed against the commercial, profit-production set-up, that it was, at heart, anti-capitalistic and revolutionary. Hitler drew his strength from the very group which contained the best material for the opposition, was swept in by a people, yearning for a socialist society.

Johann Kaspar Bauerle had left the Germany of Prussian militarism. With the coming of the Republic, he returns, a wealthy man, to his native Siebenwasser in the Rhineland, to enjoy once again South German "Gemuetlichkeit." But it is 1927 and stormtroopers are marching in Siebenwasser. Bauerle is baffled by a youth that is impudent, anti-Semitic and illiberal. When Hitler becomes Chancellor, Bauerle leaves Germany that seems to have gone back to old Prussian ways. It is no place for a civilian.

The new generation which Bauerle fails to understand is that born about 1902. (Glaeser's "Class of 1902" was an account of this youth through the war.) It is a generation that had never lived. They were children when the War broke out and then they became soldiers. Some had died before Verdun and all had experienced the inflation. They had suffered all this, "not for the Kaiser, or for the generals or for Big Business." Yet, in spite of it all, the old reactionaries were in the saddle, the reactionaries which (so it was drummed into their ears) were kept in power by the Jews and Communists. The money-changers must at last be driven from the temple. The people, the German people must recover their soil.

> The Leader is speaking: "Germany. . . . Fatherland . . . the people. . . . Love. . . . " A woman was sobbing, quite loudly, without restraint. "Our dead. . . . " The crowd was reduced to the verge of tears. "And all for this State! For these Jews! For these capitalists! . . . To us the power! To us the power! . . . " Here was a new doctor, pointing relentlessly to the blood and the festering wounds. "Give me the knife," he shouted, "give me the power!" The hall was on its feet. . . .

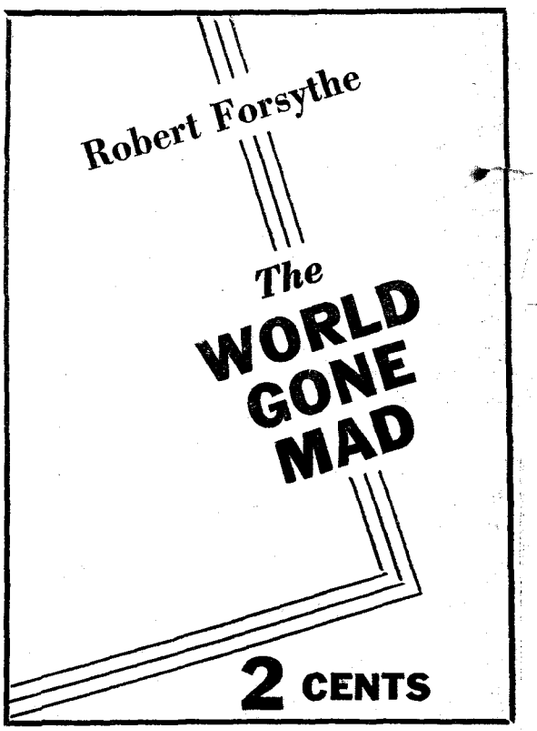
The Nazi appeal was in terms of revolutionary call to uproot the reactionary past. There lay its one pillar. The other was its appeal to the emotions. While Dern (Streicher) preaches anti-Semitism, Kalahne (Goebbels) creates the image of St. George, the dragon-slayer.

> What good did it do the Socialists to quote their Marx, nail down their opponents' inconsistencies, use logic as their weapon? In the face of St. George . . . their clever Marx shrivelled to ashes. You can't combat a dream with logic.

In this way, honest, immature revolutionary material was Hitlerized. Glaeser gives a

You asked for it!

Here it is:



"THE WORLD GONE MAD," by Robert Forsythe, aroused intense interest when it was first published in The New Masses. It was praised far and wide as a fine presentation of the world chaos existing today and the way out. Dozens of readers urged us to reprint the article in pamphlet form. We have done it, and here it is!

"THE WORLD GONE MAD," by Robert Forsythe, a 12-page pamphlet, published by The New Masses, may be obtained at 2 cents a copy (postage extra) from the

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ly-drawn picture of one such youth, Hanns Diefenbach. But Hanns' central nerve is positive and when he meets Bauerle's lovely daughter Irene, he is torn by his dual attachments. He is expelled from the party by unscrupulous charges and then commits suicide.

In a flash he was halfway down the stairs. . . . He forgot all about the priest, the armored car, and the major. All he heard was the helpless, imploring, beseeching lowing of the cattle. . . . His fingers seized the burning udders. . . . The man ran from beast to beast. He laughed and cried.

The novel thus ends on a negative note. For, while Glaeser is thorough in his depiction of the situation he has chosen, he, as thoroughly, neglects an aspect which is indissolubly bound up with the same situation, namely the Socialist-Communist opposition. This opposition is not pictured at all; it is merely declared lifeless and the entire course of events appears as inevitable. Glaeser almost makes it seem as though Bauerle with his ideal of the "beauty of doubt" is the finest German of this period, as the one unregimented civilian. But Bauerle, with his wealth and wine-feasts, with his blurred concept of democracy is only the last *bourgeois* civilian. Glaeser does not point to the distinction between the fascist non-civilian who would perpetuate civil war and the socialist non-civilian who would eliminate it permanently, to the end that civil life shall be free from military threats. The only indication of this appears by way of lyrical indirectness. Glaeser has marvellously recreated the South-German character with his passionate clinging to [illegible]ere is the peasant Anhegger who[illegible]ne is to be taken away, for failure to pay [illegible] Anhegger sends his wife and children a[illegible], barricades himself, ready to shoot up the officials. While on his grim watch, he hears the lowing of his cattle whose udders are over-full.

Later, they find him dead, with the pistol still in his hand, covered with blood and dung.

It is clear from this book (as well as from Billinger's *Fatherland*) that the honest among the Nazis conceived of Hitlerism as the way toward "the Realm . . ., the great commonwealth of all Germans of good will, of a noble band of brothers." Once again, this dream of a free Germany is being betrayed, this time more brutally, more foully and more hypocritically by an even more reactionary capitalism. But the dream is still there and the revolutionary spirit has been accelerated. It is on this rock, Glaeser seems to be saying, that German fascism will founder. However, in this task, not alone the awakened Nazis will take part. It will also and perhaps in the main, be the work of those who were not deluded by the false Nazi promises in 1927, the class-conscious working and middle-classes, which Glaeser so inexcusably omits from his picture.

VICTOR BURTT.

A Decade in Review

A FOOTNOTE TO FOLLY, by Mary Heaton Vorse. Farrar and Rinehart. $3.

IT seems incredible that one woman could see and do so much in ten years. The book begins in 1912, with Mrs. Vorse reporting the Lawrence strike. After a trip to Europe, which included the suffrage convention at Budapest and a visit to Madame Montessori, she returned for the Paterson strike, the unemployment battles of the winter of 1913-14 and the aftermath of the Ludlow massacre. Back to Europe she went, attending the women's peace conference in Holland, sounding public opinion in Germany after the sinking of the Lusitania, witnessing the effects of war on the civilian population of Western Europe. In America she took part in the Mesaba Range strike and tried to help the the persecuted objectors to war. After the armistice came England and Lloyd George, Paris and the peace conference, Italy with the workers in possession of the factories, the Second International, Berne, relief work in the Balkans, the smashing of the Hungarian Soviets and a putsch in Vienna. In the United States once more, she worked in the steel strike, organized shirt makers, took part in the fight for Sacco and Vanzetti and helped the victims of the Amalgamated lockout in New York. Then Russia, in 1921, and not merely the cities but far into the Ukraine. And finally, ten years after she had welcomed the strikers' children from Lawrence, she was assisting in the march of the children of political prisoners.

Only such an outline can suggest the scope of the book. "This is not a biography," Mrs. Vorse truthfully says. "It is a picture of the world as I saw it during an important moment of history." The reader is swept from one event to another, often protestingly. Mrs. Vorse will not linger. Always she presses ahead, sometimes saying, quite accurately, "A book could be written about this." *A Footnote to Folly* is sometimes breathtaking, but it is consistently illuminating.

It is illuminating because Mrs. Vorse has been not only a trained observer but also an active participant. In her quiet New England home she was taught not to be afraid of new ideas and to act on her convictions. The first ten years of her adult life brought her into contact with the labor movement, and, when she went to Lawrence in 1912, she was ready to learn what could be learned. "We knew now," she says of Joe O'Brien and herself after the strike, "where we belonged—on the side of the workers and not with the comfortable people among whom we were born." Everything else reenforced that lesson.

The book begins with the children of the Lawrence strikers and ends with the children of the conscientious objectors and almost every episode tells of the suffering that curses childhood in a world of poverty and war. Today, Mrs. Vorse, looking at the depression, the amassing of armaments and especially fascism, sees how terr[illegible]idhood is menaced. "We still hav[illegible]ance," she writes. "This philosophy [illegible] of religious and racial into[illegible]ts passionate urge towards wa[illegible]n the world. It is the enemy of [illegible]cracy; it is the enemy of all the fr[illegible]nd spiritual sides of life. It is our resp[illegible]ity, as individuals and as organizations, to [illegible]ist this." But she knows that we cannot be content with defending the meager privileges we have; we must push on to a planned society.

A Footnote to Folly does not have—Mrs.

Peggy Bacon

"The *Bridge of San Luis Rey* was a good book.—Whatever became of it?"

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Vorse did not try to give it—the leisurely, philosophical, introspective quality of *The Education of Henry Adams* or *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens*. It is a picture, a record, vivid and shrewd, of ten world-shaking years. It is a book that ought to be put in the hands of every complacent middle-class man and especially woman in the country. "Let us look carefully," she writes, "at this civilization which has caused the misery of countless children only to send them later to the slaughter of war. Let us weigh it and examine it. Let us not fear to look at its inequalities, its heights and depths. . . . Do we, whose children are safe at home instead of strolling the world, have no responsibility?" There is no one who has a better right to speak such words than Mary Heaton Vorse.

GRANVILLE HICKS.

Brief Review

THE SHAKESPEARE ANTHOLOGY (Random House, Inc., New York. $3.50.) Uniform with their admirably printed one-volume classics Nonesuch put out this Shakespeare, containing most of the *magnificent* lines of the plays (listed by the characters who speak them), and all the sonnets, narrative poems and miscellaneous pieces. The lover of the Bard will probably find no one of his favorite passages missed by the discerning compiler. But viewed objectively, the anthology can have no interest for anyone unfamiliar with the plays. Divorced from the drama, the verse is radiant most when the memory returns it to its right place in the action. This volume only proves how much of a dramatist the great poet was. Hence, it is hard to see why, with so many editions of the plays available, this parceling of passages will invite any new purchaser.

WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO DIE, by David Lamson. (Charles Scribner's Sons. $2.50.) Mr. Lamson's subtitle, "Prison As Seen By a Condemned Man," leaves no doubt about his attack. It is difficult to realize as one reads his unhurried narrative that at the time of its writing the author was in San Quentin facing death for the supposed murder of his wife. If there are certain aspects of prison life which one could wish that Lamson had tackled, one recalls the author's testimony that he writes only of what he saw directly. In this sense, *We Who Are About to Die* is limited. Mr. Lamson sees the prison system rather as stupid and inefficient and based on the false assumption that punishment should fit the crime rather than the individual. He indicates an awareness that economic stress lies at the root of much criminal action—see the chapter, "Hamlet's Ghost."

I TAKE IT BACK, by Margaret Fishback. (Dutton. $2.) Miss Fishback's verse her impartial publishers find replete with "insight, humor, tenderness . . . gayety . . . cynicism and sophistication"—an odd mixture. Her newest volume exhibits again that she possesses a fluent technique for light verse—a technique which, like Dorothy Parker's, might be put to good uses in social satire, but isn't. The author is, she tells us in various poems, "a poor but honest clerk" with "no rest in sight short of the grave," who slaves from nine till five. She likes W. C. Fields, vacations, cave-men, clothes and cosmetics. She hates Rudy Vallee, babies, suburbs, incorrect speech. Like Miss Parker, whom she much resembles, her verses are steeped in mirthless cleverness, self-torturing ennui and the very crispness of her manner only accentuates the emptiness of her experience and the all-pervading aridness of her reflection.

BLACK SHIRT, BLACK SKIN, by Boake Carter. Illustrations by George P. Fayko, Jr. (Telegraph Press, Harrisburg, $2). This book is apparently a collection of radio talks on the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. Mr. Carter is clever enough to give continuity to an extensive collection of surface facts about the controversy, but doesn't get far beyond that. To him Mussolini is moved by personal ambition: "He was a gambler. . . . He couldn't be destroyed. . . . His ego still drove him on." Mr. Carter's humanitarian sympathies go out to Ethiopia but he is very careful to warn America to stay out of the trouble. He is sure that it can be done too: "The national economy can be rearranged so that we will not have the surplus of goods which must be disposed in foreign territory." Mr. Carter evidently wrote this book to cash in on interest in the present war, but those who have time to read the papers needn't buy it.

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That's Their Story

The Wall Street Journal is going philosophical. A few years ago, when Babbitt and More were on the up and up, it flirted with humanism and apparently there are still humanistic influences around the office, for Thomas Woodlock pointed out the other day that the New Deal was all the fault of one J. J. Rousseau.

Woodlock also offers this for Wall Street to think about: "The new thing in the phenomenon is the change in the emphasis of the news (about big fortunes) and the development of 'proletarian' art, literature, drama and criticism. . . . When a 'movement' gets to the point of expressing itself in what we for the nonce may call literature, art and criticism, we may safely assume that something is moving."

One cannot read a dozen papers, as I do, without realizing that the labor movement is virtually boycotted in the press. Vermont papers are full of the marble strike, but there is little or nothing in the New York journals. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported the sharecroppers' convention in Little Rock (excellently covered by Myra Page in The Daily Worker), but it was not among the news that The Times found fit to print.

What the Associated Press does with labor news cannot better be illustrated than by this dispatch from Seattle: "Ex-students in Seattle's College of Communism rubbed their heads yesterday, but not over the knowledge they absorbed in the first—and only—class. . . . One hundred men representing themselves as war veterans dashed in and converted it into a school of hard knocks. Swinging clubs and blackjacks, the raiders worked their way through college in short order. . . . Several of those majoring in the principles of capitalistic struggle fought back with their fists, but suddenly found themselves enrolled in advanced astronomy as clubs were brought down on their heads Five alleged promoters and teachers . . . were arrested. None of [illegible] was arrested."

"That we seek to, or in effect do, whitewash anything, we sternly deny," says The New Yorker, cracking back at Redfield's note in *The Ruling Clawss*. And then, in the same paragraph, calls this "a social order whose foundation is freedom of speech."

Abe Magil, answering in last week's NEW MASSES Ernest Boyd's Atlantic Monthly attack on the C.P. gives Boyd too much credit, when he speaks of him as an authority in literature. Needless to say, Boyd knows more about literature than he does about Communism, but he has always been a showoff, parading names but displaying neither taste nor knowledge. What a commentary it is, by the way, on the standards of bourgeois journalism that The Atlantic would publish so shoddy and ignorant a piece as Boyd's.

Mary McCarthy devotes two-thirds of her Nation review of *Marching! Marching!* to complaining because Miss Weatherwax's workers are physically unattractive. Usually revolutionary novelists are attacked for idealizing proletarians, but if there's anybody in this world who can eat his cake and have it too, it's a liberal critic.

Jim Farrell's review of *Marching! Marching!* in Herald Tribune Books wasn't so hot. J. Donald Adams, of Section Five, is stupid. He slams the left-wing books himself or gets some other obviously incompetent hack to do it. Irita Van Doren, of Books, is smart. She assigns a left-wing novel to a left-wing novelist. Farrell is a fine novelist, but he likes only one kind of writing, the kind he does himself; so *Marching! Marching!* is lousy.

MARGARET WRIGHT MATHER.

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The Theater

Poison at the Booth—and an Antidote

WHAT can be the trouble with James Hagan? Is the author of *Midwest* (Booth Theater) shrewdly vicious or is it simply a case of downright, incredible stupidity? Anyone writing about organizing the midwest farmhands deserves an attentive hearing, of course; but he must have at least an infinitesimal notion of what he is writing about. Whatever may have been his intention, Hagan has contributed to the present movement toward fascism an insidious apology for lynching, disguised by rugged speeches, sugar-coated with mysticism and watered with the tears of mother-love.

Tooteboy Zanhiser was a fine lad till he went to college, where he stumbled into one of those ubiquitous hotbeds of Communism, from which he is now returned, to the chagrin of pa and ma. Tooteboy is quite a Communist! When strangers visit his homestead he darts off to hide. When his mother offers him money he lords it over her: "I don't need yours, I got plenty of my own"—which must be true since two organizers, (driven out of the San Francisco strike) are simply overflowing with Red wealth which they're sharing with Tooteboy. In fact, they've just bought a shiny new blue Chevrolet, that indispensable instrument without which farmhand unionizing is unthinkable. Tooteboy shouts to his pa in a voice [illegible] for three square miles: "I'm a C[illegible]munist-*ic* organizer! . . . Take up the battle-cry of Communism! Strike right and left. Resort to bloodshed if necessary!" As further proof of his authenticity as a Communist, he has schooled his father's five farmhands so well in union tactics that they brandish a gun while making their demands: "Double wages when working, full pay when laid off." Tooteboy's pupils have grown so astute in unionism that they hold torchlight parades and set fire to barns.

Unbroken sunlight is baking the ground, drought is threatening the crops. The local minister and undertaker, spiritual twins insulated against such material worries, turn to the aid of their fellows: "The folks in this county is going to do what San Francisco failed to do . . . stamp out the Red menace." And as the play moves on we shall see the mystical wisdom beneath their fury. For the only possible solution for unionization of course is a "necktie party," with Red bodies hanging from the bough.

In the heat of grief at their son's death the parents utter strange words. Ma Zanhiser rages at first: "I don't care if he was a Communist, but he had a right to think. I loved him. He was mine." Pa Zanhiser bitterly wonders why hanging was the only possible remedy—they could have tarred and feathered him or ridden him out on a rail. But the nobility of the lynchers cannot fail to impress them. Sweet verbal oils continuously drip from the mouth of the minister; and his collaborator, the undertaker, refuses to charge for the funeral expenses of the boy he helped to murder. Speedily the parents find themselves consoled; they embrace as Ma Zanhiser declares: "We won't say any more. It's over and done with." And lo, from the parched sky falls the rain, which the audience mystically recognizes as a moist benediction on all the survivors for their noble sufferings.

It is clear that James Hagan has twisted the materials of a profound emotional tragedy into a sickening mockery of human thought and feeling. But he has done more: he has contributed an inflammatory weapon to America's fascists. Is this alarmism on our part? Perhaps some readers heard of what occurred at *Midwest's* second performance. A spectator in the first row, who had been furiously applauding every anti-labor speech, was so wrought up when the man seated behind him hissed that he punched him twice as the first-act curtain fell. The recipient, Herbert Kline, editor of New Theater, returned the blows; at which the attacker howled to the audience: "He hit me first," then magically disappeared. . . . In the days immediately preceding Hitlerism such episodes were not infrequent in German theaters: fist-fights incited by a playwright's poison-pen.

There are antidotes for such poison; [illegible] no group works harder to create a positive and truthful American drama than the New Theater League. By this time NEW MASSES readers are familiar with the League's *New Theater Nights,* which presented the premieres of such works as *Waiting for Lefty* and *America, America.* On January 12 the League added a distinctive achievement to its record: three new one-act plays and a mass chant presented by the Actors' Troupe of the *Let Freedom Ring* company.

Albert Maltz's *Private Hicks* was awarded first prize in the contest held by the New Theater League and the American League against War and Fascism. Those who read the play in New Theater Magazine know that it tells a vibrant story of a young soldier in the National Guard who in the midst of an industrial battle refuses to fire on the strikers. Private Hicks submits to the devices used by his superiors to solve the episode to their satisfaction, but his integrity remains unflawed; he willingly accepts court-martial in the faith that rebellion will spread among the ranks of his fellow Guardsmen. Although its final moments are somewhat limp and schematic, *Private Hicks* is by far the best play by Albert Maltz to date. It is sharp, solid, tense with rapid dialogue; and it has only a trace of the manufactured-to-specification quality which deprived Maltz's *Black Pit* of much of its communicative conviction. Little theater groups everywhere have been begging for suitable plays. We recommend that they immediately secure

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copies of *Private Hicks*. During these days of consolidating reaction, with battles gestating in industrial centers throughout America, this simple and incisive message can have particular usefulness.

Hymn to the Rising Sun moves on an entirely different mode of thought. Paul Green uncovers a few hours of the life in a Southern chain-gang prison; he offers no "solution," he indicates no growing force of rebellion. But the picture is so deeply convincing that it moves us incomparably more than any prose or verse description we have read. Runt, a Negro convict, has been locked in the sweatbox; Bright Boy, a newcomer to the prison, raves out loud against the torture. But this is a special day in the life of the chain-gang: Independence Day, and the Captain makes a Fourth-of-July speech, which he tops off by flogging Bright Boy. Runt is released; he has suffocated. His corpse is dragged off to be buried under the ties of the railroad which has hired the convict labor. And the men clank off to their chain-gang labor.

These narrative elements may suggest that the play is an achievement in dramatic understatement; but they tell nothing of its individual quality. This is actually indescribable for *Hymn to the Rising Sun* is primarily a work of poetry—poetry of language fused with poetry of action. One goes away shaken by its subtle power; and although not a word has been said about revolt, one's body is flooded with passion to wipe from the earth the savagery of such human lives.

Enough has been said to advise readers to attend the repeat performance of this program (January 19, Civic Repertory Theater). But there are other reasons as well. There is the splendid performance by Charles Dingle; the infectious artistry of Will Geer; the feeling restraint of Shepperd Strudwick. There is Paul Green's *Unto Such Glory*, an bubbling travesty on love and revivalism in the North Carolina farm country. There is *Angelo Herndon*, by Elizabeth England. This mass chant adapted from Joseph North's article in the November 5 NEW MASSES, did about all that was possible to do with a story that is essentially narrative. No amount of contrasting images and searchlight effects in the darkness could inject into this work the quality of drama.

STANLEY BURNSHAW.

The Screen

"Riffraff"

RIFFRAFF is a movie it won't be hard to boycott. If it isn't worse than *Red Salute*, the film attacking the student movement, it runs a close second and *Red Salute* is picketed and driven out of nearly every college town it visits. Pure tripe of adolescent mentality, *Riffraff* is one of the worst, slapped down, dragged out, balled-up movies of this or any other season. It has everything in it from love on the wharves to a prison break; it has hearts and flowers of East Lynn; it has Jean Harlow gone "brownette" (light brown to you and me); and it even has Spencer Tracy slapsticked with a fish and knocked heels-up into the water. Still it isn't funny; it isn't sad; it isn't exciting and it hasn't really enough honest sex in it to make the movie magazines. But it's a Hollywood red-herring if there ever was one. And the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer tie-up with Hearst demonstrated in such pictures as this reminds us that indeed "it can happen here"!

Dutch Muller (Spencer Tracy) is the best tuna fisherman on the Coast and he knows it. He's a sort of lesser Gypo (of *The Informer*) and just as vain and thick-headed. And Hattie (Jean Harlow), as voluptuous a woman as ever worked in a cannery, is completely "gone" on him. All is well in the Golden State. Seven or eight may live in a water-front shanty, but the women with healthy faces and glowing cheeks go joyfully to work in the canneries.

"Brains," leader of the fishermen's union, warns Dutch that Belcher, the Red, is getting the boys to go out on strike. A union leader is a sort of Mussolini or Victor Emmanuel, or a cross between them on the M-G-M lot. "They won't listen to me," "Brains" says to Dutch, "but they'll listen to you."

Dutch says he'll get the "wind-bag"—wind-bag and Red, it seems, are synonymous in the movies.

"No violence," says "Brains," as they push through the crowd, whereupon Dutch jumps on the soap-box and something like the following bit of horseplay ensues:

Dutch: Where do you think you are—in Rooshia?

Belcher: No, but I wish I was.

Dutch: Oh, yeah (sock! bang! Belcher's in the water). Why don't you try swimming there?

That's the end of Belcher for a while, but "Brains" has said, "No violence." They know the catch-words and they know how to interpret them out in the Orange State.

"So what did we do when we was kids?" asks Muller. "We got together and we threw the foreign gang out. [Hearstian dialectics.] Let's go!" and the two-fisted Dutch whales into the crowd in the best vigilante manner and there's one swell scrap for the cops to break up.

The strike is called off, Dutch is the hero of the waterfront and everybody is happy except Belcher the Red and Nick the boss. The boss is a Greek, a foreigner and he's double-crossing his men, evidently because he's a foreigner. Nick wants the strike; it will break the five-year contract with the men; he'll be able to call in scabs (which according to M-G-M means lower wages), cut his costs and increase his profits. It's the foreigners, out and out, who are bringing down the American standard of living. Who was it that said Otto Kahn and the Communists were plotting to, etc.? But even this isn't the most flagrant misrepresentation, distortion or just gross stupidity that M-G-M expects the film public to swallow.

Dutch becomes the leader of the union. As a matter of fact, Dutch becomes the union. Belcher is behind him, swelling his head with "foreign" ideas. The day Dutch marries Hattie in a burlesque setting, he calls the men out on strike. Result—after ten weeks out, scabs haul in the tuna catch, the men want "Brains" to lead them again (he's the only one the boss will talk to; he's reasonable) and Dutch walks out of the union and on out of town. He's a big-shot and like Napoleon, la Rocque of the Croix de Feu or Hitler he has a destiny to fulfill. Incidentally, except that once Dutch is told that the fishermen's families must eat and except for the suggestion of a coffee line, the only concrete inconvenience of the ten-week strike we witness is the callous collection of Dutch's furniture by the installment-plan moving vans.

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The road to destiny leads to the "jungles" (*M-G-M* hasn't missed a trick) and Dutch is a sick hobo. Hattie steals money from Nick to get to him, to help him, but the see-saw's the wrong way. Dutch hops a freight and Hattie's sent "over the river." Here she has her baby ("if you have tears, prepare to shed them now"), parts with it and then escapes through a drain pipe.

In the meantime, Dutch, hungry, worn, comes back to make good. Nick rejects him, the union won't have him, but his old friend, "Brains," stands by, gets him a job as night watchman on the docks. Dutch is humbled and the redemption is at hand.

Belcher shows up for the last time; this time with explosives and a time clock. "If the union won't take you back, let's blow it up." But Dutch comes through; he beats them up, the three of them, Belcher and his two lieutenants. There'll be no dynamiting in the old town tonight. Dutch is "our hero" again. A hundred dollars from the boss, his union card from the boys, what a swell fraternity of a union this turns out to be; all it lacks are the Greek letters. And what an insult to the longshoremen who are right now tying up the shipping in the M-G-M's backyard.

And in case your ideas have been to the contrary, canneries in California are as spotlessly clean and sun-shiny as health resorts. Prisons, too, in the Merriam's state are more reminiscent of sanatoriums, kept by women who look like the head-mistress of *Maedchen in Uniform* but under whose stiff fronts are always hearts of gold. Only women who cut their husbands' throats think of escaping such peaceful solitude. How do you feel, Tom Mooney?

Riffraff has had its share of publicity and it hasn't all been favorable judged by the empty seats in the Capitol Friday night. Boycott is the word for it.

OWEN BURKE.

Current Films

Dangerous (Warner Bros.—Rivoli): A third-rate and unbelievable film about the life of the late Jeanne Eagels with Bette Davis playing the lead as the neurotic actress in the *Of Human Bondage* manner.

Captain Blood (Warner Bros.—Strand): Dr. Peter Blood in 16th century Britain. He is captured as a traitor while doing his duty as a physician. He is shipped as a slave to the West Indies. A rich man's daughter buys him: romance. He escapes and becomes a pirate. He meets the girl again and he becomes a patriotic naval hero (for England).

Rose of the Rancho (Paramount): California in the bad days of '49: anti-American Spaniards, cattle rustlers, crooks, bad men, vigilantes and a G-man. Done in light opera style but it takes itself seriously. Fortunately there is Willie Howard who cracks the film wide open with his low comedy.

King of Burlesque (20th Century-Fox): From the Irving Place strip-girl act to a high-class musical comedy. The hero meets a society dame and it means his ruin. His little neglected chorus-girl-friend gets sacrificial and organizes his come back. A musical film with the moral that it's better to stick to your lower class.

P. E.

Between Ourselves

OUT-OF-TOWN readers especially will be interested to learn that the debate between Anna Louise Strong and Tatiana Tchernavin ("Are Women Happier in the Soviet Union?"), held on January 8 under the auspices of THE NEW MASSES Forum, was a distinctive success. Anna Louise Strong, whose simple and incisive presentation was warmly received by a large audience, will write for THE NEW MASSES on various subjects of Soviet life.

The next affair to be held under the auspices of THE NEW MASSES Forum is announced for February 9 at Mecca Temple, New York. The subject tentatively selected is: "Are the Bankers Breeding Another War?" Among the speakers who have already accepted are Senator Gerald P. Nye, Chairman of the Congressional Committee now investigating munitions, and Representative John J. McSwain, Chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee.

Next week we shall give the full details of THE NEW MASSES Title Contest, which offers fifty-two prizes totaling $1,500 in cash.

So many readers took advantage of our premium offer of a six-month subscription to THE NEW MASSES and the book by Emile Gauvreau *What So Proudly We Hailed* that the supply on hand, although large, has been exhausted. It has been necessary to withdraw the offer.

Joseph Freeman will remain in Washington where he is reporting the Senate Committee investigation of the Morgan interests in relation to the World War. Freeman's second article will appear next week.

Poets who have contributed to THE NEW MASSES may be interested in submitting their work, published or unpublished, to Irvin Haas who is editing an anthology of proletarian poetry for the Black Cat Press. Communications should be addressed to Haas at 581 Snediker Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Sarah Cleghorn, who writes on the Vermont strike of the marble workers, is chiefly known for her poetry, some of which has appeared in the course of her long career, in the monthly New Masses.

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